

(vii) **Need to accord sanction to the proposal of Bihar Government for declaration of new National Highways In the State**

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI (Sitamarhi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the total length of National Highways in Bihar is 2,118 kilometres which is far less than the length of highways in other states. Since 1974 that is even after a period of about 20 years, no sanction for construction of new National Highways in the state has been accorded, whereas during this period several thousand kilometres of new National Highways have been constructed in other states of the country. The National Development Council had recommended to declare six roads covering a total length of 1000 kilometres as National Highways but the Union Government has not taken any decision in this regard so far. In 1990, a proposal for declaring certain roads in Patna, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Sursand and Bhithamor, with a total length of about 1400 kilometres, as National Highways was sent to the Union Government for approval, but it is still pending with the Government.

Therefore, I request the Union Government that for a backward state like Bihar, approval for National Road Construction Scheme for a construction of roads on a large scale may be accorded so that it could help in the development of that area.

12.44 hrs

GENERAL BUDGET, 1994-95
GENERAL DISCUSSION

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Now we take up further General Discussion on the Budget (General) for 1994-95.

The General Discussion on the Budget has taken place for 30 hours and 21 minutes. The time allotted was ten hours only and all the Parties which were given in the time had consumed the time which was allotted to them. All the same, the views of some of the leaders of the Parties also should be heard on this and we would like to know those views.

I think, at about 5 p.m. it should be possible for the Finance Minister to reply to the General Discussion on the Budget. Up to that time, we will allow the Members to make their views known to us.

SHRI MOHAN RAWALE (Bombay-South Central): Sir, I want to speak on this.

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow you. But you make your points very briefly.

Now Shrimati Dil Kumari Bhandari will speak.

Shri Indrajit Gupta, would you like to speak in the afternoon?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Midnapore): Sir, if you permit me, I will speak.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Vajpayee also wants to speak. Shri Somnath Chatterjee also wants to speak on this.

Now, I call Shrimati Dil Kumari Bhandari to speak.

SHRIMATI DIL KUMARI BHANDARI (Sikkim): Mr. Speaker, Sir, every year when the hon. Finance Minister presents his Budget Speech, I always come to this august House with a strong hope that at least this year the hon. Finance Minister would be a little liberal and generous to the people of the hills

and the Himalayan regions of India, in terms of budgetary relief and allocation and devolution of financial resources. But all these years, I have gone back to my home State, Sikkim, with shattered aspirations and with a feeling of severe alienation.

12.46 hrs

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

However, being the lone representative of the people of Sikkim, I cannot remain shattered and unheard. I am constrained to say that nothing has been done for removal of regional imbalances in the country. The hill areas of India, constituting about twelve per cent of the total geographical area and six per cent of the national population, have been neglected all these years. The socio-economic composition and also the development pattern have been lopsided even after independence of our country, accelerating the process of impoverishment inequality and hardships in the hill areas or the hilly regions.

Hilly regions, right from Jammu and Kashmir up to Arunachal Pradesh, including Sikkim, are industrially backward. You would kindly agree with me, Sir, that these regions can very well be used for promotion of various value-added industries. The regions have the much required dust-free atmosphere, but we do not have adequate infrastructures and accessible raw materials and we lack in proper incentives to both the local entrepreneurs as well as the entrepreneurs from outside. I am again at pains to point out that the hon. Finance Minister has completely ignored the interests of the hill States, like Sikkim, in announcing duty relief and other incentives to the entrepreneurs who have initiated ventures in such inhospitable

terrains. It is heartening to note the hon. Finance Minister's announcement that the five years tax holiday, to new investment in the industrially backward States, like Sikkim, announced in the last year's budget, would also be extended to other backward districts which were not covered last year. This concession has had some palpable impact on the State like Sikkim. Investments are pouring in but again, in the absence of effective infrastructure, the take off is very dismal. Against this background, may I make a humble suggestion to the hon. Finance Minister that hill States in India and Sikkim in Particular, should be given special duty relief in terms of import of raw materials and in the process of production and marketing, for at least the next few years to come. They should involve new sector like infrastructure electronics, semi-conductors, software and traditional sectors like carpets and handicrafts, which have huge export potential.

All said and done, the best set in a hill State has always been the service sector and most importantly tourism. This is one sector which has not only shown ample promise but also ability to absorb the increasing challenges of unemployment. The hon. Finance Minister would kindly agree with me when I propose that this sector should no more remain in the hands of the Government alone. The private sector should be encouraged to join in wherever it is worth. This should be more so in a State like Sikkim because of the lack of both infrastructural and Financial resources with the State Government.

Our experience in the State has been that unless we extend certain unilateral incentives the private sector always shies away from participation. For example, in the tourism sector also whenever the State Government extended certain attractive incentives, the

[Shrimati Dil Kumari Bhandari]

dearth of the private sector participation has never been recorded.

But, if I may say so the State Governments alone cannot do such promotional activities. To a great extent it is your policies, hon. Finance Minister, that determine the upswings and downswings in the service sector activities. May I, therefore, request the Finance Minister to announce a new incentive policy that would involve the entire services sectors in the hill States?

Sir, I would be failing in any duty if I do not put on record of the hardships the people of my State, Sikkim, have been subjected to due to the pre-Budget and post-Budget price hike of essential commodities. More than anything else, I believe the degree of adverse impact has been much higher and serious in Sikkim than on many other States. This is because of the very difficult terrains we have in Sikkim along with other features like poor infrastructure and our square dependence on other neighbouring States. In fact, the increase in the food price along with the hike in petroleum prices has cascading effect on the overall inflation on which the State Government has no control.

The impact of the quantum hike of prices, of late, has taken a serious turn into political violence by the anti-social elements in Sikkim which, otherwise, can boast of being the most peaceful State in the country.

^ Sir, last but not the least, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Finance Minister to a very disturbed situation in Sikkim. Sir, while thanking you for exempting the Bhutias and Lepchas from the provisions of Central Income-tax

laws as proposed in your 1994-95 Budget. I would like to draw your kind attention to a very serious implication of the extension of Central Income-tax laws to Sikkim with effect from 1995.

I hope, Sir, you have been receiving a lot of representations from all sections of the people of Sikkim and recently the former Chief Minister, Shri Kazi Lendung Dorzi, who was the architect of merger of Sikkimese people with the Indian Union, has also given his representation to this effect.

Sir, you are aware that Sikkim, though not in the North Eastern Council of States, is one of the most backward States of the Indian Union and has a very different politico-historical setting when it became a constituent State of India in 1975. It is a well-known fact that the agitation of 1973 against the Chogyal was a product of the economic frustrations of the vast majority combining all ethnic groups. In fact the ethnic issues have been so vital to the society and polity of Sikkim that even the then Maharaja of Sikkim, time and again, brought forward various policies to safeguard the social and economic interests of the three major ethnic groups, namely Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese.

I will speak in detail when I get a chance to speak on the Finance Bill. But, may I request the hon. Finance Minister, through you, Sir, to kindly reconsider his decision and exempt the ethnic Sikkimese of Nepali origin also from the Central Income-tax rules?

With this request I thank you for giving me time to speak.

SHRI BIJOY KRISHNA HANDIQUÉ
(Jorhat): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise

to support the Budget of 1994-95. All through these four Budgets in consecutive years, a definite pattern and a philosophy has been emerging into shape. You will remember, the first Budget of this Government, in 1991-92, was presented at a time when the country was passing through a deep financial crisis. Survival was then the keynote. In the 1992-93 Budget, economic viability superseded the economic expansion since the series of structural reforms measures were the need of the hour to save and tone up the economy even with the harsh consequence and pain in its wake. In the 1993-94 Budget there was somehow a breakthrough. Things were picking up as a result of these reforms. Development and economic expansion of services to the community and matters academic made their presence felt.

But the budget of 1994-95 however burst upon the economic scenario with a boldness, a boldness that sweeps critics off their feet. This boldness is not born out of desperation, but out of mature thinking and strategy at the heart of which lies the Government's commitment to socio-economic growth and objective.

Sir, it is interesting to note that in the context of massive surges in reserves and fiscal deficit an argument has been put forward that the budget focusses more attention on the aspect of destabilisation than structural adjustment. It appears, no doubt, on the surface that the expenditure supersedes revenue receipts. But this is too simplistic a way to look at the points at issue. The optimism of the Finance Minister that the supply side will respond handsomely to the stimulus and that revenue buoyancy will make up the reduced rates is not just a facile and idle optimism. It needs to be viewed in depth.

Sir, one school of opinion rightly comments like this:

"The real problem is not so much in the quantitative dimension of the fiscal indicators as with the qualitative dimension, that is, the structural expenditure and revenue and financing of the budget. It is the quality of revenue mobilisation as well as the expenditure strategy that must cause concern not so much the quantity of resources or expenditure."

I am not saying that the quantity does not matter. Quantity does matter, but it is not an overriding concern in a developing economy saddled with debts, troubled about inflation and yearning for equitable growth. It is in this context that the Finance Minister said in the course of his speech that fiscal experts are unanimous that it is possible to reduce the rates and yet mobilise additional revenues by improving tax administration and compliance. We have to bear in mind that in the present economic situation, strict adherence to the dogma of fiscal stabilisation would have stifled industrial growth. So, it boils down to this question. Shall we let the theory of fiscal stabilisation dictate things and let the prospect of socio-economic growth go on the rocks? No Government committed to the socio-economic cause can leave the entire issue of economic benefits to the poor to the market. Our Prime Minister has repeatedly asserted that the ultimate aim of the reforms is to reach the poor so that in the process the lot of the poor improves and in that journey to the goal, we have given much latitudes and concessions to the industrial sector to ensure a rapid growth with a tax system that provides potential for saving and thereby investment and increasing the ability to take risks, corporate tax has been raised to 40

[Shri Bijoy Krishna Handique]

per cent and import duty has come down to a maximum of 65 per cent. So, it is for the industry to grow or perish. But rural development can never wait. Let us take an illustration on this point from the budget of 1994-95. Rural development is on top priority in the national agenda for the Government. If the Government has to wait for fiscal stabilisation, a mere structural concept, the rural development today would have been in the cold storage, thus giving the go-by to people's aspirations. So, in contrast to his earlier budgets, the Finance Minister has augmented the Plan outlay for the social sector by 17.4 per cent. Rural outlay has been increased by 40 per cent. Emphasis is on rural development, education, health and family welfare.

Sir, in several concessions that have been given to the rural sector, the Finance Minister has proposed Rs. 2,200 crore for food subsidy and Rs. 900 crore for fertiliser subsidy. The outlay for the department has been increased from Rs. 5,010 crore in the last year's budget to Rs. 7,010 crore this year. In 1992-93, it was Rs. 3,100 crore. For the next Employment Assurance Scheme which is being implemented in 1,752 identified blocks, an outlay of Rs. 1,200 crore has been provided as compared to Rs. 600 crore last year.

13.00 hrs.

The allocation of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has been enhanced by Rs. 545 crores and goes up to Rs. 3,855 crores. These measures form part of the philosophy of the Budget.

What we need to do is to contain the deficit of Rs. 6,000 crores. The revised figure for 1993-94 is Rs. 9,060

crores. It is, no doubt, a very hard task ahead. For, if the actual deficit overtakes the Budget estimates and if the supply side does not respond to the incentives in the Budget, then we no doubt face a grim prospect. It is an onerous and difficult task but definitely not an impossible task. Tighten up your belt in tax administration and compliance, cut down wasteful expenditure to zero and you can still have a spell of growth without taxation despite fiscal deficit. That is the challenge of the situation implicit in the Budget. It is not, however, a permanent deviation from the trend path which is followed in the last three years. It is not the calculation of the Finance Minister that fiscal deficit is no problem. As a matter of fact, the really disturbing dimension of the Budget is the massive increase in fiscal revenue and primary deficit. Against a budgeted figure of Rs. 34,058 crores, the fiscal deficit has shot up to Rs. 32,727 crores. This is, no doubt, a cause for serious concern. Because you will note that the Finance Minister himself has recently in a meeting of the Confederation of Indian industries refocused industry's attention on the massive tax evasion now playing havoc with the Government revenue. There is no doubt that this malaise is the greatest threat and industrialists will have to blame themselves if Government chooses to slap down a penal tax regime. It is also high time that Government constituted a Committee on Expenditure to control Government expenditure and, as suggested by Dr. Chellaiah in one of his recent comments on the Budget, it is rather a calculated risk necessitated by compulsion of circumstances and not gambling, as alleged particularly because deficit is on safe level in view of the 13 billion dollars foreign exchange reserves, current account deficit is at less than 0.5 per cent, moderate inflation rate, comfortable foodgrain stock and expected export growth by 15 per cent in 1994-95. Is not

then this challenge worth taking instead of tinkering with conventional measures, hedging each with a surfeit of pusillanimous cautiousness?

The other point I would like to highlight is the Defence outlay on which I have, however, some reservations. In the international scenario unipolarised, with checks and balances effectively during the bi-polar world having gone, some serious threat perceptions emanate externally and also internally in the form of trans-border terrorism in a bid to destabilise the country. You will remember this is heightened by Pakistan's recent near successful attempt of getting arms supply from America. Because of the last four years resource constraint, armed forces were denied their dues. According to the Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, Shri Jasjit Singh, a retired Air Commodore, writing on defence of India, said:—

"The country has allowed defence spending as a proportion of GDP in real terms to slump from slightly over 4 per cent in 1986-87 to a mere 2.44 per cent in the original Budget of 1993-94, a decline of 40 per cent during a period of sluggish economic growth."

So, an increased Defence outlay is not only the answer to the situation but a morale booster to our armed forces. But Defence outlay in this year's Budget, needs a few clarifications as to the size of the funds actually made available. This year's 20 per cent increase in the Defence Budget is not so great in real terms. The increase in absolute figures of Revised Estimates of Rs. 21,500 crores over the Budget Estimates of Rs. 19,180 crores for 1993-94 is 12.1 per cent. This is equal to the inflation rate of 8.5 per cent and growth rate of the economy. In other

words, the defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP will remain the same. The increase in Budget Estimates for 1993-94 is just about seven per cent. Surely, next year's inflation rate and growth rate together will exceed this percentage. Consequently, the Budget Estimates for 1994-95 as they stand will register a decline in percentage. Thus, it appears that the Finance Minister's attempt to provide the Armed Forces with a budget that could meet the minimum of requirements had fallen substantially. You will remember that the Armed Forces had been promised some Rs. 102,000 crores for the Eighth Defence Plan covering the 1990-91 to 1994-95 period. This figure now shows that there is a shortfall of some Rs. 8000 crores in terms of 1990 prices. I hope the Finance Minister will have a second thought on this point.

Before, I conclude, I could refer, in a few sentences, to the outlay for Science and Technology which is down by 2.5 per cent: Compared to the 1993-94 Revised Estimates of Rs. 4395.18 crores, the 1994-95 Budget Estimates come down to Rs. 4235.24 crores. Even the assurances of the Finance Minister in the last year's budget to boost up matters academic particularly, research work, did not make much headway. Research Centres and Universities are still languishing. I hope matters academic, which the hon. Minister himself claims are so dear to him, will not get a short shrift in the coming year too.

There are some instances of taxation which are inexplicable. I will give two instances. One is tax on the soaps. Soap as a typical product of the small-scale industry occupies a major part of our daily life in spite of the superior products of the big companies. It is not only that. The small-scale industries have got a great

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role in creating employment opportunities. This protection to small-scale industries has to continue in the interest of creating employment. Otherwise, the nation will face a massive social unrest.

Secondly, there is a 10 per cent tax on the branded ayurvedic medicines. As far as the ayurvedic medicines are concerned, we want them to expand and prosper. At the same time, you will remember that they are the medicines for the common, poor people. But it has been unreasonably taxed. I do not understand why it is taxed. I hope this tax will be withdrawn.

I would just like to refer to the North-Eastern region in a few sentences. In view of the growing decline in the State allocations, I would like the Finance Minister to consider the position of the critical States like those in the North East and a few other States outside this region. Besides, during the last year's Budget, the Finance Minister made an announcement of five years' tax holiday for the North-Eastern region. Many in the whole country thought that it was a great opportunity for us. But we in the North-Eastern region took it cool. For, we knew that there would be no takers. The reason is obvious. In a region where there is no industrial infrastructure, the five years' tax holiday is no attraction at all. By the time the entrepreneurs build it up from a scratch, that five years' will fly off. So, they are back in the square in respect of taxation. So, unless it is 10 years' tax holiday with Government's some positive steps in creating infrastructure, such concessions would remain just a cosmetic application to the ills of the region.

In conclusion, Sir, you know the hon. Finance Minister represents the

North-Eastern region in this Parliament. I hope, he knows by now what ails this region, what hurts the sentiments of the people of this region and what pains the awareness that they have yet to find an assured place in the map of national development. I hope, the hon. Finance Minister will rise to the occasion as he represents the North-Eastern region.

SHRI MOHAN RAWALE (Bombay—South Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Congress Government has prepared the current budget keeping in view the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. No attention has been paid in it to the common people, the workers, the peasants, the unemployed and the Government employees. On the other hand, special attention has been paid and facilities given to big industrialists, the affluent classes, the NRIs and the foreign companies. India's independence has been mortgaged with the IMF and the World Bank by bowing to their dictates and decreasing the customs duty on many items. The Congress Government has deviated from all traditions regarding presentation of budget in the Parliament because 28th February is the day fixed for budget presentation but this Government made a pre-budget increase in the prices of foodgrains, petrol and other essential commodities, thus rendering the presentation of budget itself irrelevant. The Government has announced in this budget that no new taxes will be imposed but the Congress Party wants to take political advantage out of it. Through this budget, the Government is collecting donation from the industrialists for funding the next elections. The Government has reduced many taxes in favour of industrialists but they have not allowed the benefits of these facilities reach the common people, similarly, despite decreasing the prices of certain items by the Government, their prices in the

market have not come down. There is no impact of this decrease in the market.

The hon. Finance Minister's budget speech does not give any indication as to how the prices would be controlled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per the report of the Auditor General, an expenditure of Rs. 13,937.77 crores incurred upto 1988 under the head Petrol has not been shown anywhere in the budget. I cannot understand as to where did that money go? The Government should fix the price of petrol between Rs. 4 and 5 per liter because the Government has collected Rs. 5,008.37 crores by imposing Oil Development cess for 28 years. The Oil Board should have given this amount to the Industry Board but it has not been given to the latter. Nobody knows as to where did the Government spend that money? On the one hand, the Government is looting the poor and on the other it is increasing the prices of petrol, as a result of which the prices of all other commodities are shooting up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government also earns profit in transport. It earned Rs. 8,052.85 crores from the transport sector. I want the whole matter to be investigated. Today, this Government is looting us and I do not understand as to how will it control the prices when, tomorrow, foreign companies enter the country? The Government should clarify the exact position in the House.

The condition of mill workers in Bombay city has worsened due to the anti-mill worker policy of the Government. At the time of nationalisation of NTC mills, the Government had made a commitment to protect the employment of the workers but in practice, it is not being done so. Many NTC mills are lying closed today and about 70,000 workers have been

rendered jobless Where shall they go? This Government is not ready to restore employment to them despite the Supreme Court's ruling to this effect. The Government gives Rs. one crore only to the NTC for repair of 120 mills all over the country but it gives Rs. 300 crore to meet the requirement of the VRS scheme meant for retrenching the workers. I was also there in the tripartite committee of NTC, Bombay in which it was decided that no mill would be allowed to become sick and closed down.

But the decision was taken to close NTC mills in total disregard of the decision taken on 9th instance. The premises of these mills worth crores of rupees are being sold out and this Central Government is pushing our Marathi people out.

The Government of Maharashtra has proposed to give 50 per cent equity capital in order to run these NTC mills on Co-operative basis and has asked the Central Government to give 40 per cent capital. I would, therefore, request the Government to give the 40 per cent equity asked for in order to save lives of the workers who are ready to contribute the rest of 10 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government is not supplying cotton to them and in reply to my queries in the tripartite meeting and in the Parliamentary Consultative Committee to this effect, they said that they would indulge in corruption if cotton was supplied to them. I cannot understand what type of Government they are running? The mills are not getting raw material due to which many workers are sitting idle. I would, therefore, request the Government to seriously consider the Government of Maharashtra's proposal of permitting these mills to be run on co-operative basis and accept the same so that the poor workers may make both ends meet.

[Shri Mohan Rawale]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the deficit of Rs. 6000 crores shown in 1994-95 has been deliberately shown on lower side. Last year's budget deficit was less and it was said that it would come to Rs. 9060 crores instead of an estimated Rs. 4314 crores. In fact, this deficit would not be less than Rs. 15000 crores and its burden will fall on the poor and the general masses. The Government will go on increasing the prices everytime in the same manner. The prices of essential commodities increased by 8.1 per cent in 1993-94. In 1992, the increase was to the tune of 2.5 per cent. The prices of wheat increased by 8.1 per cent that of rice by 6.9 per cent, vegetables 39.1 per cent, onion 147.7 per cent, tea 7.5 per cent, coffee 28.3 per cent, meat 9.8 per cent and spices 24 per cent. Where is Governments' election promise of reducing the prices within 90 days. This Government believes in giving slogans but does not implement them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Income Tax worth crores of rupees is outstanding against the big people which should be collected from them, so that there is no need to impose more and more taxes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, finally, I would like to say that a theft of Rs. 66 crore had taken place in Igatpuri. The Government had later agreed that the theft was of Rs. 2 crores only. I have a written proof with me but it has not been known till date as to where did that money go? Petrol was drained out of wagons. There was a big scandal. We had raised a hue and cry over this in this House. The scandal was published in the newspapers but what happened to the stolen petrol is not known to anybody.

Ships from abroad are procured for breaking in India. No cargo can be

brought in those ships destined for India as per the rules. But some mischievous people give very high bids in order to procure those ships from abroad and bring cargo in them. By this, the Government suffers loss of customs duty on the one hand and on the other, the genuine people engaged in ship breaking industry are not able to procure these ships. I shall cite an example of this.

Messers N.G. Industrial Services Private Limited with its office at 208, Tulsiani Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay procured ships from abroad for the purpose of ship-breaking out brought 150 containers in one ship, M.V. Ocean Blessing,' containing contraband goods worth Rs. 200 crores. There were explosives also in it. That ship was harboured at the old Manglore port in the State of Karnataka. That company is engaged in such activities. Written complaints from different parties were sent to the Government umpteen times to this effect but the Government turned a deaf ear to those and that company is making strides in this illegal business. It is obvious that many officers are involved in it. The Government should initiate a full-fledged enquiry into this matter and find out the source of money mobilised for the purpose.

Mazhgaon Docks, a Public Limited Company, had a contract of Rs. 760 crores of Bombay High Shore. That contract was awarded to Larson and Tubro, a limited company in tandem with the high officials because they gave lower quotations. There are 150 labourers in the Mazhgaon Docks working on temporary basis and they have not been made permanent for the last 10 years. They are being laid off presently for want of work.

About 60 lakh people live in the slums of Bombay. Rs. 17,944 crores in the shape of taxes are collected from

Bombay city. We should get 10 per cent of that amount for the repairs of old houses and improvement of slums. As many as 300 families migrate to Bombay every day.

I thank you for granting me time to speak.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned for lunch to reassemble at 2.20 p.m.

13.21 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till Twenty Minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

[English]

14.20 hrs.

At 14.20 hours quorum bell was rung. No quorum was made. At 14.23 hours quorum bell was rung again and no quorum was made. At 14.26 hours once again quorum bell was rung and no quorum was made.

14.31 hrs

ANNOUNCEMENT RE: ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TILL 14.45 HRS. FOR LACK OF QUORUM

SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is no quorum. So, the House cannot meet. We cannot start the House till there is quorum. Honourable Speaker has directed that the House will meet at 2.45 P.M.

The Lok Sabha reassembled at Forty Seven Minutes past Fourteen of the Clock

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

[Translation]

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA (Madhubani): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to make a submission. The whole Cabinet keeps away from the House and quorum is not complete. It is waste of time. This is a blot on the Parliamentary system and this is being done frequently. This time too, barring 1-2 Ministers, the rest are absent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, kindly give a ruling on it.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is being done under a conspiracy since the time Shri Mallikarjun has taken over as the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALIKARJUN): There is no conspiracy. It is the usual trend. In fact, if every Member of Parliament feels that it is his responsibility to attend the House, it is obligatory on his part to attend the House as people's representative, then there is no problem. But, nobody can say anything to an Hon. Member of Parliament. He is supreme and all pervading.

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA: Does it mean that he is justifying the mass absence of the Council of Ministers from the House? (*Interruptions*)