

and the type of direction that we need to move. So, on the whole, I would like to say, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, that the agenda for the three strategic Departments is fairly ambitious as what we need to do in the next 10 to 15 years or even 20 years. The necessary financial support should be forthcoming. I am happy to note that we continue to get the type of support that the scientists are looking forward, but there has to be a level of ambition which is far above what is currently seen in the context of planning and visualising the future of these departments. It is here that I think, the political system, the scientific community and the whole lot of user-base that use this kind of a system have to come together and look for a direction for the 21st century. I think, the present developments assure us that this is possible. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned to meet at 2.30 p.m. -

The House then adjourned for lunch at forty-five minutes past one of the clock.

The House re-assembled after lunch at thirty minutes past two of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (RAILWAYS), 2007-08

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): Sir, I lay on the Table a statement (in English and Hindi) showing Supplementary Demands for Grants (Railways) for the year 2007-2008.

MOTION OF THANKS ON THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS—Contd.

PROF. M.S. SWAMINATHAN (Nominated): Sir, I thank you for the opportunity. What to speak of the President's Address? It gives an inspiring account of the various steps taken to promote socially inclusive economic growth. I think, all the steps, if they are successful, they are quite a landmark in the developmental history. I, however, wish, there has also been a reference to the National Policy for Farmers presented by the Minister for Agriculture, Shri Sharad Pawarji, last November, in this House. I do not think the significance of that particular policy statement is widely understood because neither in the colonial times nor in Independent India has there been a policy for farmers. There have been many policies for *krishi* but nothing for *Kisans*. This is the first time we have a policy, in the whole history of many centuries, a policy of *kisans*. Now, that also makes two very important commitments. One is to change the direction of our agricultural strategy to one of promoting the net income of the farmers, not measure agricultural progress only in terms of million tonnes of wheat or rice, but what has happened to the farmers.

To give an idea, one of the reports says that even in a State like Punjab, a farmer, having 3.79 hectares growing wheat or rice today is able to earn an income which is less than the starting salary of a Class-IV servant of the Government of India. I am sure, this disparity is going to increase after the Sixth Pay Commission gives its report. Therefore, I would very much like to see that this commitment in the national policy to income orientation to the farmers—the Government has started this process—is taken.

The other very important part of that particular policy is how to attract and retain the youth in farming. Today, when elders want to leave farming, it is very difficult to get young people, including those who have taken their agricultural graduate degrees, and so on, from agricultural universities, taking up farming. The policy contains some prescription for doing

this. I think, this is very urgent in relation to the future of our agriculture at a time when the global prices of foodgrains are going up, and the global and national food stocks are dwindling. I think, we should see to it that the National Policy For Farmers finds a respectful place among the initiatives taken for inclusive growth and also attend to not only the policy but also to its implementation. Thank you.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is with a marked sense of unreality that I rise to say what I have to, in the concluding phase of the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. My unreality is enhanced and marked by certain factors which I must very sadly now list. Sir, I had only one or two clarifications to seek until now with a view to edifying myself or informing myself from the hon. the Prime Minister because he is the principal authority that replies to debate on the President's Address. While recognising that we are at the end of the debate and it really is a situation in which, what I term quite often as debate fatigue has set in. But I had made a great error, Sir, and I regret that error because I turned on the Television and to inform myself of the hon. the Prime Minister's views as he addressed or replied the other House. I must say, Sir, in that reply I was very greatly disappointed because the Prime Minister gave vent to a great deal of what I can only treat and call as his pet hates; that reply, Sir, was unbecoming, it was unwarranted and extremely saddening. Our sense of concern arises from the unreality between the President's Address, the Prime Minister's response to the debate and the world that we actually inhabit or, live in. There are concerns about this Government and the Prime Minister has heightened them three-fold by his reply. But the great divide between the dream world of the Prime Minister's reply and the citizens of the country, I will come to it in a moment. Before that, Sir, I consider it my bounden duty to respond to some of the points that were made just a few hours back and possibly that was even a, few hours, Sir, but constantly being repeated, more particularly, Sir is this issue, which I found that given the fact that hon. the Prime Minister is in possession of all facts, and given also that, Sir, the ruling party and certain highly placed personalities in the ruling party are frequently citing it, I must very sadly refer to this whole question of terrorism as the first issue. It has been covered extensively in the debate. I had no intention of referring to it because I did want to be repetitious in what I said, if an issue had already been covered. The Prime Minister found it fit to bring in the issue of Kandahar and he cited my going to Kandahar as an instance of the approach of the NDA Government to terrorism. If I do not here, Sir, cite, all the various instances of the UPA, about its predecessor Governments of the Congress Party, it is because I really do not think it necessary for me to adopt the same level of debate that very sadly the Prime Minister today adopted, I repeatedly call it sad, Sir, because I had the benefit and occasion here in this House and the other House of listening ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM (Andhra Pradesh): He is saying something ...*(Interruptions)*... Did he not go there? ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, he is saying that it is unbecoming of the Prime Minister...*(Interruptions)*... This should not go on record ...*(Interruptions)*... This should be removed. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR CHAIRMAN: Please allow the hon. leader of the Opposition to proceed. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please allow the Leader of the Opposition to speak. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please allow the discussion to proceed.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I repeatedly called it sad, Sir, because I have had the benefit and occasion here in this House and the other House of listening...

SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Sir, he is saying something which has not gone in his individual capacity, it has gone...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to proceed. *(Interruptions)* Please allow...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: He is ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please allow him to speak. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: That word should be removed *(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please allow the discussion to proceed. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Sir, he is using such a...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, the hon. Prime Minister found fit to cite the example of Kandahar as demonstrations the approach of the NDA Government to combating terrorism and if I do not here cite all the numerous examples of the UPA or the pre-UPA Governments, it is only because I am really mindful of the enormity of the challenge that India faces. May I remind the hon. Prime Minister, Sir, that on this whole matter of Kandahar a large number of canards have been spread. On an earlier occasion, an hon. Member sitting then with the Treasury had charged me with taking several million dollars in bags to Afghanistan as a payment to the terrorists. I had then said in the House, Sir, the hon. Home Minister was then present, so also the Minister of External Affairs, they are in possession of all facts. If they want to investigate this matter they are free to investigate. Till they have investigated and satisfied themselves, I shall withdraw from the House and I had indeed withdrawn from the House, within a few hours, the House having adjourned immediately, the Member who had then raised this issue came to me, in my office and apologised. I didn't find it in any sense a very satisfying experience for myself because the challenge of Kandahar was a challenge to the entire country, not simply to a party or a person and I am disappointed, Sir, that the hon. Prime Minister holding the high office, has reduced the entire question of combating terrorism to our individual infirmity. This is a very sad matter for me to comment upon but I cite to the hon. Prime Minister all the various happenings, then, of the Youth Congress organised movements on the road in front of the Prime Minister's House, rolling on the ground, stopping of traffic, interrupting Press Conferences and above all that, a kind of a public '*matam*' was being observed almost daily on the streets of Delhi. It was a very painful and a very demeaning experience in India. Sir, because this has gone on for too long--and Dr. Manmohan Singh was then the Leader of the Opposition here--I have here Sir, a Press report and of which perhaps the hon. Prime Minister is aware. He was the Leader of the Opposition. He attended that meeting and there was an all-Party meeting on 27th of December 1999, It was a meeting in which this question was raised by the then Prime Minister and he asked everybody how do we deal with this problem. This is what the report says, "The political parties present at the meeting cautioned the Government that whatever decision it takes must be taken keeping in mind the interest and safety of the passengers who were on board, the star-crossed aircraft." There was, Sir, in Kandahar on that evening of fateful December, 1999, no space for any additional aircraft. Even the relief aircraft that had been sent could not be sent. If I had gone, I went because I had then assessed, as directed by the Cabinet and quite rightly that simply letting 166 innocent men, women, Indians and foreigners die, will not end terrorism. Those 166 once dead are finally dead, because after death there is no return. That decision was for life, for saving lives and that decision was also to fight terrorism in the best manner that we

can. The hon. Prime Minister then said--without wanting to score points--'we failed to prevent an attack on the Parliament House by terrorists,' I used to then have an office here, if I remember correctly, it was Room No. 21, the attack was on the gate which is barely 20 feet from my office. I would like to remind the hon. Prime Minister that in combating that attack 9 Indian citizens died. The hon. Prime Minister and the UPA Government are yet to take a decision on the punishment that has already been awarded to the chief perpetrator and conspirator by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court said that he deserves the punishment of hanging. This Government is yet to execute the Supreme Court order. This is not a competition, Mr. Chairman. This is not a competition as to who is more virile and effective in combating terrorism. It is a menace and a challenge that we have to face collectively. That is why, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister's intervention was so disappointing. The hon. Prime Minister spoke in a manner and with a content that I have not ever heard any other Prime Minister to engage in. If it is the NDA and the deeds of the NDA that trouble him, there are other avenues that the Parliament and there are other occasions than reply to the President's Address. Sir, I do not wish to go into this total canard. The hon. Prime Minister said that the debts of the NDA and cultivators of India are, today, being repaid by the UPA Government. It will be a laughable assertion to make, but, for the immense sadness of it, as it came from the hon. Prime Minister's mouth. If I was here, in this Assembly, to start reciting all the great debts that the Congress Party owes to the country, and start with the partition of the country, then go to 1948 and the stopping in Jammu and Kashmir of our forces and perpetuation of Jammu and Kashmir problem. Should I go to 1962; should I go to IPKF; then go to setting Punjab on fire and setting Assam on fire ...(Interruptions)... and, thereafter, simultaneously, to set Jammu and Kashmir on fire ...(Interruptions)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, allow the Leader of the Opposition to proceed.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I am referring to the hon. Prime Minister ...(Interruptions)... There is no doubt that the hon. Prime Minister, having come to this high office through an act of rather a left-handed grace, attempts to do his best in addressing this responsibility. I wish to ask him a direct question here with regard to his total approach to terrorism. I wish to ask two or three questions. One of those relate to this. I have news here from Washington that the hon. Prime Minister and his Government of the UPA, without informing Parliament, or without letting it even appear in the press, has already given a permission to a Pakistani citizen by name, Ms. Asma Jahangir—has, indeed, been invited by Dr. Manmohan Singh's Government—to examine religious freedom in the country. Further, that she has already begun her visit. She is coming here, I am told, as a UN rapporteur, which implies that she will go to Jammu & Kashmir also, where we have never permitted any representative of the UN Human Rights Council, or, anybody else, or, the Human Rights Council's rapporteur, thus, establishing a precedent. This precedent is extremely damaging. And, whatever here individuality and sensibility to India, or Indian concerns, or human rights concerns, notwithstanding all this, this is a very bad precedent. We firstly expect a reciprocal gesture from Pakistan, and even if you do not have that how is it necessary for all this to be kept hidden from the country or the Parliament? Sir, I wish to also ask, and I had no intention of doing all this, till I had, about Shabir Shah, with whose name you are all familiar, he chose to deliver an address to the Jammat-ud-Dawa, an organization widely recognized as the parent body of the internationally proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba. On February 5, 2007, the Lashkar chief declared, "The Jihad in Kashmir will end when all the Hindus would be destroyed in India". And, Lashkar Commander, Nasr Javed, told the audience, "Jihad will spread from Kashmir to other parts of India and Muslims will be ruling Indian again". "jihad", Hafiz Md.

Saeed said, "has been ordained by Allah. It is not an order of a General that can be started one day and stopped the next day". Indeed, a similar statement was made by Ghulam Nabi Fai in New York, celebrating the birth of Kosovo that it has become 193rd nation of the United Nations, and the international community. I am citing it as an example of terrorism. We have not had the benefit of what the Government's stand on all these issues are. If I do not cite all the various other examples of terrorism and the Government's stand on them, it is because I do not, in reality, wish to visit, revisit, all those sad episodes. I said, Sir, I have sense of marked unreality. Now, I shall try to address some points of the President's Address to Parliament. I have just five issues, on which, very briefly, I will say what I have to.

First is the internal. I do wish to share with the House that so far as *antrik suraksha* or the internal is concerned, there is a dread of the future that invades the country, today, no matter what the Government tells us. There is also, in the internal, a divide between 'them' and 'us'; between the Government and us. And, perhaps, in the context of this divide, I am struck by the unreality of this whole debate and the promotion of reservation, in this new approach to reservation, by the hon. Prime Minister or the UPA Government. This is a destructive weapon. I deliberately call it a weapon. All of us pass through the Central Hall. But, perhaps, all of us do not pay attention to the plaque in the Central Hall, which says that the Constituent Assembly of India met here from 9th December 1946. When the Constituent Assembly first met, Sir, on 9th December, 1946 the Muslim League had chosen to remain absent. It had chosen to remain away because of a dispute that had arisen on the scheme of groupings. I would not go into all that. But, why I am citing the Muslim League here and their absence from the Constituent Assembly is to point out that the Muslim League, thereafter, despite what Gandhi had advised them, revived themselves in India. And, then, rather mindlessly they demanded yet, again, within months of the formation of Pakistan not only reservation of seats, but a separate electorate as well. This is just what the present UPA Government is heading towards. Sir, I wish to cite only a few lines from what the then home Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, said. "I do not know whether there has been any change in the Muslims attitude to bring forward such an amendment." This is an amendment to the Constitution of India. ".....to bring forward such an amendment even now after all this wrong reflection and experience of what had happened in this country. But, I know this that there was a mandate from the Muslim League to move this amendment. I feel sorry for them. This is not a place today for acting on mandates. This is a place today to act on your conscience and to act for the good of the country. For a community to think that its interests are different from the rest of the country in which it lives is a great mistake. Assuming that we agree today to the reservation of seats, I would consider myself to be the greatest enemy of the Muslim community because of the consequences of such a step in a secular and a democratic State." This is the debate in the Constituent Assembly on 26th May, 1949.

Earlier, Sir, Mahatma Gandhi, when he was on a visit to London, at a Garden Party, then, organized by His Majesty, the King, was accosted by Lady Minto because the whole problem had started with the Mont-Ford reforms of 1906. It began to be executed from 1919 which first planted the seed of reservation. In that, Lady Minto went up to Mahatma Gandhi and said, "Mr. Gandhi, I am so and so." And Mahatma Gandhi had responded, "Of course, I know you Lady Minto. You are what has caused us all the trouble for all these subsequent years, perhaps." There are other portions that followed. That is not relevant, Sir. That seed of separation which was planted by Mont-Ford from 1906 onwards following a Muslim League delegation that had gone then to Simla—I would not go into all that history. Let us not relive that history because reservation, in essence, for a community seals the separation

3.00 P.M.

it seals them in watertight compartments and that is not an act that moves towards national integration, or even the benefit that you wish to give to any one section of India's foreign relations.

Sir, I was struck by the differences between the approaches that the hon. Prime Minister has to the Maoist threat and by the hon. Home Minister. We heard it and we appreciated when the Prime Minister mentioned that the greatest threat today; the internal threat to the country are the Maoists.

A few weeks later, the learned hon. Home Minister rebutted his own Prime Minister and said, "No, this is not so. The greatest threats are not the Maoists." I did not know whether the Prime Minister or the Home Minister is the determinant of policy in this regard. It has not been rebutted.....

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I did not expect Shri Jaswant Singh to make this point. He would not succeed in creating a cleavage between the Prime Minister and his Home Minister.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: No, Sir, such is not my intention because the Prime Minister has an appointment by a rather left handed grace and favour. The Home Minister is lesser of a beneficiary of this grace and favour. So, of course, I have no intention of causing any discord between the two of them. It is necessary. Sir, that instead of commenting on whether you have a difference with the hon. Prime Minister or not, to please clarify this, Mr. Prime Minister, so that the country comes to know where you stand, where the Government stands whether the Maoists are the greatest threat or they are not. Sir, I wish to also say just a word क्योंकि वक्त बहुत हो गया है ...(व्यवधान) आप अगर थोड़ी शांति रखें तो ...(व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, Please ...(Interruptions)...

श्री जसवन्त सिंह: कोई भी स्वभाव से दूर हट नहीं सकता। स्वभाव हममें, हमारी सारी कार्यवाही में अंतर्निहित होता है और हम सबका स्वभाव बनता है, संस्कारों से, जन्म से। हम यह समझते और मानते हैं कि आपके संस्कार बतौर एक सिविल सर्वेंट पड़े हैं तो आपका सारा रवैया और ऐपरोच बतौर सिविल सर्वेंट होगा, यह हम मान करके चलते हैं। इसलिए अभी जो सिविल सर्विस के हालात हैं, हम आपको बहुत ...(व्यवधान)

एक माननीय सदस्य: स्वभाव वह होता है ...(व्यवधान) जब आप कंधार गए थे, वहाँ हुआ था ...(व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, Please ...(Interruptions)...

श्री राशिद अल्वी (आन्ध्र प्रदेश): सर, यहां पर यशवंत सिन्हा साहब बैठे हैं, वे भी ...(व्यवधान) इन्हें ऐसा नहीं कहना चाहिए ...(व्यवधान) It is very objectionable. ...(Interruptions)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please proceed, Sir.

श्री जसवन्त सिंह: स्वभाव में क्या आपत्ति है ...(व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please allow the hon. Member to proceed.

श्री जसवन्त सिंह: अगर माननीय मित्रों में से कोई यह कहे कि भई, तुम्हारा स्वभाव फौज का या फौजी का है, तो मैं मंजूर करूंगा, क्योंकि मैंने ...(व्यवधान) फौज में शुरू की ...(व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: अल्वी साहब, प्लीज ...(व्यवधान) Please allow the hon. Member to continue. ...(Interruptions)...

SHRI RAASHID ALVI: He should withdraw and apologise. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please proceed, Sir.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I cautioned you about the state of the civil service and the morale of the civil service. There is a very real feeling that the civil service considers itself to be rather a privatised organisation; the Civil Service is the Civil Service of India. It is not a service which subserves the interests, or, the whims and fancies of only one political party. Please heed to my caution. This is a very real danger that has arisen. Any number of civil servants today are an extremely worried lot. They will, perhaps, not tell you because you live in an isolated splendour of number seven. Sir, on the question of economics, there will be a larger debate and that debate will follow. I know the Prime Minister an internationally renowned economists, it is with great trepidation, therefore that I make any economic point. But even as an illiterate denizen of the desert, I do venture to make one or two points. Sir, there is both a global and a domestic slowdown. Please recognise it. We have already, in the current year, a lower production particularly, in manufacturing. It is a fact, Sir, and a very clear fact. There are simultaneously rising prices and a global food shortage and a national food shortage. We are today net importers of wheat, rice and pulses. This is a damaging development because, Sir, no one will feed one billion plus human beings, and there is no way that India can go back to the days when our economy was called a 'ship to mouth economy'. Sir, I do wish to caution you that the prices, even of vegetables, have today reached levels which make it very difficult for the citizens. There is a trap in which we are caught and the trap is of interest rates and heavy inflow of hard currency. I took a short, but a very educative and a free tutorial from a very prominent economist last evening because of which I feel emboldened enough to say that we are on an extremely tenuous ground, the ice is thin, and let us please not paint to the country such pictures as are unrealistic. I was informed, Sir, that there is—and you would understand what I say—a marked difference, Mr. Prime Minister, between the state of our real economy, the state of our financial economy, and, of course, fiscal economy, of which the Government always holds charge. सर, कृषि पर अपने आप चर्चा होगी, मैं कुछ और नहीं कहना चाहता। मैं अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मामलों पर तीन-चार बातें कह दूँ। वैसे माननीय विदेश मंत्री जी ने यहां पर एक वक्तव्य दिया है। वक्तव्य लम्बा है। उस पर काफी चर्चा होगी। मैं बहुत शीघ्र आपको एक यात्रा पर ले चलूँ। एक प्रकार की परिधि है, भारत के पड़ोस की या एक परिक्रमा कहें। हमारा जो पड़ोस है, चाहे आप श्रीलंका से शुरू करें चाहे ऊपर नॉर्थ से शुरू करें और anti-clockwise चलें चाहे clockwise चलें, सारा पड़ोस आज उपद्रवग्रस्त है। And if the entire neighbourhood, Sir, is trouble-torn, and if we are faced by the real possibility of either actual 'failed' States or imminent 'failed' States, then it is a major challenge to India's stability. This external challenge, when combined with the internal challenge of the Maoists and question marks on the economy, raise very severe and challenging question marks on the Government's approach to this entire issue.

Sir, I appeal to the Prime Minister: Please recognise the larger dimension of what is happening. Sir, earlier, the centre of global turbulence was not in our neighbourhood. It is primarily on account of the US policy in the region. And when I say region, our region extends to the Central Asia, our region extends to Iran, Iraq, the Gulf as also, of course, Palestine, Israel and so also Somalia. This entire neighbourhood of ours, including the immediate neighbourhood, is a disturbed area. It is disturbed because the area today is a victim of faulty policies and much faultier implementation of the US approach to this region. Sir, the developments in Pakistan recently are not a matter of casual indifference to us and we cannot take shelter behind the fact that if we say something, then there would be adverse reactions in Pakistan. We have to address this question because I fear that with the examples

that I cited earlier of the recrudescence of terrorism and terrorist activities and expressions of intent in Pakistan are directly our concern. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq—Iraq is already a destroyed country—it is ironic, Sir, that in this entire region, whoever aligned itself as a country in polices with the United States of America, has had to pay grievously its national interests. I think there is a lesson in it for us and if you do not hear that bell, and if you do not heed the caution, then, Sir, only the Government has to be blamed.

I would take a minute, Sir, on a new development about which the silence of the Government of India has intrigued me very greatly. It has also troubled me Sir, on the 17th of February, the Serbian province of Kosovo, which had been under the UN administration since 1999, unilaterally either declared, or its persuaded to declare, independence. This was an illegal and a provocative act. Kosovo has unfortunately been recognised; of course, it was instigated by the cosy club of Anglo-Saxons Cousins by the United States, Great Britain, France—France is not Anglo-Saxon—and Germany. So, my case against the recognition is based not only on the Security Council Resolution of 1999, which reaffirmed Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo, but also on the view that the international system, as a result of this Act would become, believe me, more unstable, more insecure and more unpredictable. This doctrine of imposing solutions to ethnic conflicts, legitimising acts of unilateral secession by a province or other non-state actors is a very dangerous doctrine, which, under no circumstances, India can accept. This Act, Sir, of a unilateral declaration of Independence, is a result of mostly Albanian Kosovo problems and symbolises, to my mind, the resurgence of old 19th century imperial western interests. Sir, it has, admittedly, a large Albanian Muslim population, but what we are witnessing in the Balkans, is really in effect an indigestible piece of meat in the bowels of Europe. These are the residual after-effect of the end of the Ottoman Empire. It is not just simply this, Sir; this is yet another attempt to encircle Russia. It is an attempt to corner some pipeline systems, and the industrial resources of Kosovo, which now are sadly being handed over virtually so, to Halliburton and I do not have to explain what Halliburton is. I won't persist further, Sir, but what is saddening and has caused me concern is the relative silence of the Government of India on this issue of very great importance. Kosovo might be a tiny province of a country in the middle of the Balkans, but sometimes, small events like this from the Balkans have caused very great upheavals. Sir, I come to my conclusion. I have a few queries to ask. Sir, certain statements have been made recently. I must make a request earnestly to the hon. the Prime Minister; to my good friend, for whom I have a very high regard. The hon. *Raksha Mantri* who recently, on a visit to the North East, spoke glowingly about infrastructure development by the People's Republic of China in the adjoining areas of Tibet. It is a thought I can leave with you, Sir, that such statements, even if just ideas serve no purpose, even if they recognise the existing reality.

The hon. the External Affairs Minister, another very experienced, learned, possibly the most experienced person in the Government, had recently made a statement about China. He also made two or three other statements, which I shall quickly cover. On China he said, which was disconcerting, to my mind, 'Yes, there have been border incursions, but they are nothing serious.' Border incursions are nothing serious! Somewhere there is a great disjoint in the meaning of these two statements. I press this not for an answer, Sir, but because it had a consequence.

Thereafter, Sir, he also said something about the Hyde Act. He said, 'We follow only our interest, not the Hyde Act.' I heard a rather authoritative and somewhat demanding statements by not only the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, but also a new arrival on Indian shores,

on the relevance of Hyde Act. I know that you and your Government have said that it will do only that which is in our interest.

Thirdly, Sir, it is about External Affairs Minister again. It is a very intriguing thing. I should not really be raising it until the discussion takes place on his statement. There is just one rather concise but intriguing sentence that the hon. the Prime Minister made during his visit to People's Republic of China. This is exactly what it says, "PM also took up the issue of trans-border rivers." I would like to caution you, Sir, that the question of the Brahmaputra and the great bend of the Brahmaputra before it debouches into Assam and in the North East is a serious matter. Sir, I have obtained for myself maps from our Space Research Organisation and it shows that this gorge of the Yarlung Tsangpo and thereafter the Namcha Barwa mountain, has a drop of 2000 metres. It is a narrow gorge, and drops some 2000 metres in a distance of about 15 kilometres. This gives an enormous resource for energy to the people of Republic of China. I know there are plans to build a dam there. I would like to know what the response of the People's Republic of China was about this.

Finally, Sir, I must make an appeal to the Prime Minister and my good friend, the *Raksha Mantri*. Very recently, and repeatedly, some most unwanted, unwise and also, if I might say so, irresponsible and, therefore, unacceptable statements were made by the Chief of the Army Staff on Television. This is the first time ever, Sir, in my seven terms in Parliament that I am criticising the Chief of Army Staff. I am mindful of my origin in the Indian Army from where I resigned. I was sadly disappointed. If I might address the hon. Defence Minister, he has termed border incursions, because of difference of approach, as really an issue of approach. But it is not so, it is not just an approach. It is a determination of the border of the country. The Chief of the Army Staff is certainly not the authority to comment or rule on the importance of encroachments on our borders and what the response ought to. If he was commissioned or authorised by you to say so, I urge you to please revise that authorisation, and, thereafter, for me to witness though I did not witness it because I am not an avid viewer of television, but number of my friends from the Army and elsewhere said, "What is this happening? Why is the Chief of the Army Staff engaging in this kind of free-for-all on television about Pakistan, China and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir?" It is unbecoming, unwanted, and irresponsible and it is harmful for the dignity not just of the high Office that he holds but also for the total responsibility that he carries and for the security of the country.

Sir, I do not wish to persist any further. I had the intention only of raising one or two points, but for the great disappointment of hon. the Prime Minister's intervention, I had to speak longer than I wanted to. I am grateful to the House and to you for accepting my intervention and I appeal to the Prime Minister to address the questions that we have raised and this is why, I find it difficult to go along with the Motion of Thanks.

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to join other Members of the House in conveying our very sincere thanks to the hon. President for her inspiring Address. This is the 60th year of our Independence and it is a matter of pride for all of us that in this 60th year of our Republic, the first lady President of the Republic addressed the Parliament. Sir, my esteemed friend, Shri Jaswant Singhji, has tried to introduce unnecessary acrimony and anger, and I wish to assure him that I have nothing but the highest respect for him as a distinguished leader of our country who has served our country with great distinction. So, whatever I have said, should not be taken as any personal criticism. He brought up what I said in the other House and the discussion was on the subject of terrorism. My reference to Kandhar was in the specific context of the allegation that we are soft on

terror. This was also the point that Shri Arun Jaitley made—that we have provided a soft legal regime for terrorist,—and those sorts of allegations were made. I was referring merely to the fact that the existence of POTA, all the sabre-rattling of the BJP could not prevent the incidents at Akshardham, Raghunath Mandir and IC-814. On the contrary, I made the point that terrorism is a common enemy which we have to fight unitedly. There are no questions of party lines in dealing with this menace which threatens our very existence as a civilised state. Therefore, I would also beg of our colleagues in the Opposition that they may not like what we are doing and they have a right to differ—that is the essence of democracy—but they should not then call us anti-national or that we are soft on terrorism. To accuse the Congress of being soft on terrorism is something which, I do not think, we will be able to tolerate. I would respectfully submit to this House that we should be resolute in our opposition to all forms of terror and support our brave security forces who are fighting a difficult, long drawn out battle. It should be our common endeavour and should not divide the country, should not divide either Houses of Parliament.

Sir, I listened to the debate. I was not present all the time, but I have looked at the transcripts and it is good that this debate took place. I sincerely hope that the Opposition makes it a habit to promote such debates because this debate brings out what unites us and what divides us. Democracy thrives when there is dialogue, there is discussion, there is scope for dissent, there is scope for differences of opinion without being branded anti-nationals or other sorts of names that Mr. Jaswant Singh has tried to use against me personally. I would not talk about that. I sincerely hope that such debates will be the norm and the House will not witness the type of disruptions which do us no credit—either to the Government or to the Opposition. So, I was very happy that his debate took place. It took place and I have heard some very learned speeches. Dr. Swaminathan spoke about farmers' security, which is something that I entirely share. I will come to that.

We need a new look at farmers' problems. We have to look at the problem of agriculture not merely from the aggregative point of view of increasing food production but also what we could do to give our small and marginal farmers, in particular, the capacity to lead a life of dignity and self-respect, that the difference between urban and rural areas should lessen over a time and not widen. I, therefore, thank Dr. Swaminathan. The farmers' policy is a national policy adopted by our Government and we will pay adequate attention to its proper implementation.

In the same way, I listened in my room with great respect to what Dr. Kasturirangan had to say. I compliment him the way he has tried to educate all of us as to what the nuclear deal is about, what we need to do to strengthen our capabilities in the space programme, and in the strategic nuclear programme, and, I assure him that we will not compromise on the security needs of our country. We take very seriously whatever he has said.

Sir, while I am on the subject, the President did mention that negotiations on the nuclear deal are on with the International Atomic Energy Agency. We hope that they will be successfully concluded. But I also recognise the other dimension that we have to evolve a broad-based consensus. Simultaneously, those efforts are on and we will continue to persist with that effort also.

But, Sir, while I am on the subject, I would not like to say something more. I read with great interest the statement and interview given by Shri Brajesh Mishra, The former National Security Advisor to the NDA Government, in which he listened to the call of his conscience and has now come out openly in favour of the Indo-US nuclear deal.

There are also statements of the former American negotiator, Strobe Talbott, who negotiated these matters with my learned friend, Shri Jaswant Singhji, about the BJP's willingness to accept a much less favourable civil nuclear deal when they were in office *(Interruptions)*

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA (Jharkhand): It is absolutely wrong. *(Interruptions)* The Party has condemned the statement...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please allow the hon. Prime Minister to reply. *(Interruptions)*

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: He has stated...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: By quoting this ...*(Interruptions)*... It will not give any credit...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please allow the hon. Prime Minister to continue....*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: You will not gain anything by quoting a statement which has already been contradicted by me...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please allow the hon. Prime Minister to continue ...*(Interruptions)*. . Hon. Members can seek clarifications. Please allow the Leader of the House to proceed...*(Interruptions)*...

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, we did not interrupt the Leader of the Opposition...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: He is not prepared to listen to us...*(Interruptions)*... He is misleading this House ...*(Interruptions)*... He cannot mislead the House. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can seek a clarification, but please allow the speech to proceed...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I now urge the Bheeshma Pitamaha of Indian politics, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to also listen to the call of his conscience, and let the national interest prevail over narrow political and partisan approach ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would request the hon. Members to allow the Prime Minister to proceed ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Does it mean that the people who are opposed to the deal are anti-national? Does it mean that we do not have the conscience? ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You will have an opportunity. Please allow the speech of the hon. Prime Minister to proceed...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA (Jharkhand): That means those who are not supporting the deal, are anti-national...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, we did not interrupt the Leader of the Opposition ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, if there is one theme which unites all sections of the House, that is the primacy of agriculture. There can be no inclusive growth if Indian agriculture stagnates, if the farmers of our country are not active participants in the

economic prosperity that takes place. So, I was, therefore, very touched by the references in several Members' speeches to the state of our agriculture. Shri Janeshwar Mishra, Shri Sitaram Yechury, Shri Arun Jaitley, Shri Shahid Siddique and Shri Arjun Sengupta, they all touched upon the plight of our farmers, and let me say that this is a concern which I share, and that we have tried within the limits of our capabilities, and we will continue to persist, to give our agriculture a more dynamic look.

Sir, while many Members have referred to the agriculture distress and farmers' suicides in some parts of the country, there are others who have said that the debt relief we have announced in the Budget is inadequate. Hon. Members have expressed concern that the debt relief alone is not adequate, and that the relief does not touch many farmers who are outside the institutional credit system.

Before I go further, Sir, people quote poverty numbers, people quote the standard of living of 77 per cent of the population of our country being less than 2 dollars a day... and let me say that all these statistics. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, it is less than Rs. 20/-.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: All these statistics stop at 2004-05. This is not a period which is covered by our Government. We came into office in May, 2004 and I am not going to claim that we have changed things drastically, in a short period of three-and-a-half years, but I still persist in saying that we have begun the process to give our agriculture a new thrust, a new orientation. That we have in our quest for inclusive growth have laid a lot more emphasis on education, a lot more emphasis on rural health and a lot more emphasis in looking after the interests of tribals, farmers, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities. And when I talked about the empowerment of minorities, I do not feel that I have to be apologetic for it. 'Inclusive growth' means that all sections of our population should share in prosperity, and if any section of our population feels disenfranchised, that is a danger not only to the economic growth of our country but also to its political and social stability. Therefore, it is the duty of our Government to work honestly and sincerely to empower the marginalised sections of society; if they are *dalits*, so be it; if they are Scheduled Tribes, so be it; if they are minorities, so be it. I do not, I think, make an apology for having adopted this inclusive approach to processes of development.

Sir, talking about agriculture, I should like to inform this House that when we came into office, we inherited a situation where agriculture was suffering from prolonged neglect. Agricultural growth had decelerated from an average of 3.5 per cent per year, observed in the period 1980-81 to 1996-97, to 2.2 per cent between 1997-98 and 2003-04. This deceleration was due to the unpardonable neglect of the investment requirements of agriculture and related rural infrastructure. There were signs of rural distress everywhere. Healthy food surpluses were being termed as burdensome.

Hon. Members are aware that this Government has given top priority to agriculture from the very beginning. Sir, it was the late Lal Bahadur Shastriji who gave us the slogan "Jai Jawan, Jai Kishan". We believe that the farmer defends the security of our nation as much as the soldier. The welfare of farmers is, therefore, of utmost importance, and we have been giving due attention to these problems.

Over the last four years, we have taken many initiatives to script a new story for agriculture. They include initiatives to improve the financial security of our farmers, to improve the

social and economic infrastructure in rural areas and to offer better prices to our farmers. We have increased investment in agriculture and this is showing visible results. The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and the National Food Security Mission commit almost Rs. 35,000 crores, over five years, to increase the availability of foodgrains and improve agricultural practices. They recognise that agricultural dynamism requires strategies tailored to the specific agro-climatic conditions of an area. The agricultural research and extension systems are being given due attention after languishing without care for many years.

Sir, recognising that the future prosperity of agriculture depends crucially on diversification into higher value crops, we launched a National Horticulture Mission which is beginning to produce results. We have also taken steps to modernise agricultural marketing. This strategy of agricultural diversification is working and sectors such as horticulture, poultry livestock and dairying are growing at rates between six and eight per cent per annum.

Agricultural credit has almost tripled in four years. Farmers have been given loans at a subsidised rate for the last two years. It is through our efforts that the cooperative banking system has been revitalised. We have, with great effort, reversed the trend of declining investment in agriculture. We have improved the terms of trade for farmers. We have raised the Minimum Support Prices substantially for both wheat and paddy.

It is, of course, too early to claim success in our agriculture strategy. But I am happy to share with the House that the agricultural record of this Government is much better than that of our predecessors. The figures speak for themselves. The first four years of our Government beginning in 2004-05 yielded a growth rate in agriculture of 3.3 per cent on an average. This compares with an average of 2.3 per cent in the preceding four years under the NDA Government. In fact, the growth rate in the last three years ending 2007-08 is as high as 4.2 per cent.

In the year 1999-2000, the Minimum Support Price for wheat was Rs. 580 per quintal. The previous Government raised it by a paltry amount of Rs. 10 per annum, that is, by a total of Rs. 50 in five years, a rise of 8.6 per cent only. In the last four years, we have raised the Minimum Support Price for wheat by Rs. 370, a rise of 56 per cent in four years. In the case of paddy too, we have raised the Minimum Support Price by 33 per cent in four years as compared to 12 per cent in the five year of the NDA Government. Gross Capital Formation in agriculture as a proportion of GDP has improved from a low of 10.2 per cent in 2003-04 to 12.5 per cent in 2006-07. After many years, agricultural growth touched almost four per cent last year. Those who neglected the welfare of farmers, depressed the Minimum Support Price and the terms of trade for agriculture, those who exported our food surpluses away at a loss, have no right to be advocating farmers' welfare today. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: What? ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please. ...*(Interruptions)*... Hon. Members, please. ...*(Interruptions)*... Let the Prime Minister proceed. ...*(Interruptions)*... Don't interrupt the speech. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: (Andhra Pradesh): He can explain his Government's achievements. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री सुरेन्द्र लाठः कितनी आत्महत्याएं हुई हैं, उसका भी ब्यौरा दे दो। ...*(व्यवधान)*... कितने लोगों ने आत्महत्याएं की हैं? ...*(व्यवधान)*... कितनी महंगाई बढ़ी है? ...*(व्यवधान)*...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, if the PM is giving...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Narayanasamy, please. ...*(Interruptions)*... Panyji, please.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is the distress of our bold peasantry that brought the UPA to office. This distress is a legacy of the NDA rule, a rule during which policies were anti-farmer, anti-agriculture and low Minimum Support Prices. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री संतोष बागड़ोदिया: आज भी हार मानने के लिए तैयार नहीं हैं। ...*(व्यवधान)*... आज भी हार बर्दाश्त नहीं हुई। ...*(व्यवधान)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please. ...*(Interruptions)*... I would request the hon. Members to allow the Prime Minister's statement to continue....*(Interruptions)*...

श्री यशवंत सिन्हा: यह सब करने के बाद भी गुजरात में क्या हुआ, हिमाचल में क्या हुआ, पंजाब में क्या हुआ? ...*(व्यवधान)*... प्रधानमंत्री का भाषण सुनने के लिए लोग जमा नहीं हुए। ...*(व्यवधान)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would appeal to both sides of the House...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री यशवंत सिन्हा: उनका भाषण सुन रहा था...*(व्यवधान)*...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, they are just ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Narayanasamy, please sit down. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री सुरेन्द्र लाठ: उसका क्या हुआ? ...*(व्यवधान)*...

श्री यशवंत सिन्हा: हमारे समय में...*(व्यवधान)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yashwant ji, please sit down....*(Interruptions)*... Listen to his speech. Let the Prime Minister proceed. ...*(Interruptions)*... आप बैठ जाइए। ...*(व्यवधान)*...

श्री सुरेन्द्र लाठ: प्रधान मंत्री जी, सदन को गुमराह नहीं करें, सच बताएं। ...*(व्यवधान)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please don't interrupt.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please keep quiet. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, we did not disturb him for a second. I would request. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I appeal to all of you to listen to the Prime Minister. Let us hear his speech.

आप लोग कृपया खामोश हो जाएं। ...*(व्यवधान)*...

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, people talk about the poverty of our farmers, the burden of indebtedness of our farmers. I am pointing out that the policies of the previous Government, by depressing the Minimum Support Prices, contributed directly to this increase in ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, this is absolutely wrong. *(Interruptions)*

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Sir, in 2004, when we came into office, we found that the credit was not being given to farmers because of overdues and, therefore, we arranged for

restructuring. Restructuring of agricultural loan was again repeated in the year 2006 ...*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have clearly pointed out that we inherited an agriculture in deep distress, our farming community in deep distress and we set about correcting the state of affairs straightaway and the first thing which we did was the tripling of agricultural credit flow in the last three years. But this did not address the problem of past debt. The debt relief we have announced is our attempt to finally remove the burden of the NDA period from our farmers' shoulders. We are determined to end agriculture distress. We will not stop till we have wiped the tears from the eyes of all the farmers. *(Interruptions)* That is why, our Government took the historic initiative to waive farmers' loans on an unprecedented scale. A debt relief scheme of this magnitude has never been conceived or attempted before. It is an income transfer on an unparalleled scale. If bankruptcy is a permissible form of business outcome in industry, what is irrational about this waiver in favour of our farmers? It will allow a fresh flow of institutional credit to distressed farmers. It will clean up banks' balance sheets. It will stimulate economic activity in rural India.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Finance Minister has mentioned that the total cost of the debt relief will be around Rs. 60,000 crores. This covers all scheduled commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks and cooperative banks. It covers both production and direct investment credit. It is not just about NPAs, but it is also about overdues. And it will benefit about 4 crores of farmers. The debt relief will be ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): What about loans from private moneylenders? ...*(Interruptions)*... They are in debt because of borrowings from private moneylenders? ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Why don't you also do it in respect of money borrowed from private moneylenders? *(Interruptions)* Why do you divide the farmers?

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: The debt relief will be a simple exercise which we will complete by June. It will not be a long drawn-out affair.

I agree that there will be farmers outside the pale of institutional credit who do not benefit from this waiver. For them, we have started a programme of financial inclusion so that each and every farmer has a bank account and is able to access institutional credit. We have a programme since 2004 by which ...*(Interruptions)*... Listen to me, please...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, no cross talking.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: I am answering your point. I wish to point out that we have a programme since 2004 by which banks will swap and take over the loans from moneylenders. This is what we have done. Some States, like Andhra Pradesh, have utilised this facility a lot. I want other States to take full advantage of this facility.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the sheer size of our gesture shows our commitment to farmers, our determination to improve their lot and our desire to see agriculture restored to its rightful place in the Indian economy. Doubts have been raised about the resources required for this write-off. But I wish to remind this House that through this debt relief, what we have done is nothing more than picking out the unpaid distress bills left behind by the NDA Government...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: What happens to your 30 years of rule?...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Is he there to talk about 1998—2004 or, is he here to talk about 2007?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You all had your time to raise your points. Now, that is over...*(Interruptions)*... Let him finish.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to assure the hon. Members of this House that this package will be well-funded. Whereas farmers will see the benefits of the relief package immediately, banks will be compensated as and when the loans become due. The details are being worked out. I believe that the dues to the banks, including production and investment credit, will materialise over a period of three to four years. We will make adequate provisions from tax and non-tax revenues over this period to fund this package. Let there be no doubt that the banking system will not be constrained in any manner and there will be no contraction in liquidity. As the Finance Minister has requested, we need the unstinted support of the entire House to help implement this historic decision. We should not grudge our farmers their due.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think, everybody will agree that inclusive growth does not mean that there should be reckless inflation. Inflation is the worst enemy of the poor, particularly because 90 per cent of our people live outside the organised economy. They have no protection against rise in prices, institutions of social security and income compensation do not exist, and, therefore, I think, there will be universal agreement in this House that every effort should be made to keep prices under reasonable control. That has been our effort. But, as Shri Jaswant Singhji said ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI (Uttar Pradesh): Will you yield for a minute?

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: No, I am not yielding. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has not conceded. ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: He refuses to answer this question.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: As Shri Jaswant Singhji has rightly pointed out, we are operating in a highly changed international atmosphere. In the world today, international oil prices have skyrocketed. When we came to office, the price of a barrel of oil was 36 dollars. Today, it is over a 100 dollars. Commodity prices are rising. In the NDA period, whenever there was a shortage—and there have been shortages of pulses, there have been shortages of oilseeds—we could import in large quantities. But, today, under the impact of the energy crisis, the bio-diesel, the prices of vegetable oils like palm oil have also shot up enormously. The result is that the import route does not provide us the safety valve that it did earlier. Despite all these, our effort has been, and will be, to keep prices under reasonable control and we have made that effort. We have provided remunerative prices to our farmers, but we have not put this additional burden on the consumer, in the last four years, the prices of public distribution system supplies, both for people above the poverty line and for those below the poverty line, have not been increased at all. Also, while the prices of petroleum products internationally have skyrocketed, there has been no increase in the price of kerosene oil in the last four years, or, for that matter, in the price of LPG. There has been only a marginal increase in the price of diesel and the price of petroleum. Therefore, ours has been the approach of a caring Government. We do recognise that the people at the margin are suffering and that every effort must be made to lessen their burden. That has been our effort. It will be our effort in the years to come. And the House has my assurance that, whatever is

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needed to keep prices under control, will be done. But, it is also the responsibility of the State Governments to strengthen the public distribution system. Merely by inflating the number of people living below the poverty line, you do not, I think, solve the problem. As I mentioned earlier, the poverty figures that are being mentioned in Dr. Arjun Sengupta's Report stop at 2004-05. Therefore, this Report cannot be used as a criticism of the policies that we have pursued.

Sir, I should make a reference to one area which has caused concern to all of us. Mention has been made in this House about our inability to honour our commitment so far for women's reservation in Parliament and in State Legislatures. The House would note that we have made efforts on several occasions. We have not succeeded. But, in the light of what has been stated in both the Houses, I think, the time has come for us to make yet another effort. It will be our effort to evolve a broad-based consensus so that we can bring a Bill, which will meet these objectives, as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, there is yet another issue about malnutrition, particularly, malnutrition of our children and pregnant women. Some hon. Members have referred to the problem of malnutrition and I share their concern. I agree that malnutrition is a matter of national shame, particularly if it affects such large number of our people. There are districts in India where malnutrition is chronic. We need to eradicate this blot from our record.

In the last four years, we have expanded the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme by over 80 per cent. There will further expansion this year. We are committed to universalisation of the ICDS system. Anganwadi workers are being incentivised with better remuneration. This shows our commitment to the programme.

The Mid-Day Meal Programme, covering over 11 crore children, the largest single feeding programme in the world as a whole, is now being expanded to cover another 2.5 crore children. States can certainly use these programmes to tackle the problem of malnutrition.

Sir, I wanted to say something about the internal security. But I have already dealt with this thing. I do suggest to this hon. House that concerns about internal security are valid. We face many threats. Terrorism, particularly if it is financed from across our borders, is one such matter. There is also extremism of another type, Left Wing extremism. Our Government's response in dealing with both these problems has been as firm as is required. I will be the last person to say that we have found all the clues to all the incidents that took place, but energetic efforts have been made to complete the investigations and to bring the culprits to book. We have been in constant touch with the Chief Ministers of the States afflicted with Left Wing Extremism. We have given them whatever support they require. This support will be available and, therefore States which are affected by this menace--particularly, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, or Jharkhand--have our assurance that the Central Government stands ready to assist them in every possible way. I would not say more on the subject.

Shri Jaswant Singhji has a lot of advice for my colleagues. I am sure, they must have taken note of whatever advice that he had to tender to them. He has referred to the visit of a human rights activist, Asma Jehangir. I do not have all the facts with me. I will certainly have this looked into and, in due course of time, I will make this information available to him and to anybody else. I do agree with him that the external environment around us is a cause of worry. There is trouble in Pakistan, there is trouble in Nepal, there is trouble in Bangladesh

there is trouble in Sir Lanka. All these issues and the broad approach in dealing with them have been spelt out in the President's Address and I would not like to go over that territory once again.

Since there is a new ray of hope in Pakistan. I thought I should say a few words on the developments in Pakistan. Sir, our priority remains our neighbourhood. We want peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia. I want to begin by congratulating the people of Pakistan who have shown that like us, they want to choose the democratic path. I am sure the House will join me in conveying to them our warmest good wishes as they consolidate democracy in their country. A great daughter of Pakistan had to sacrifice her life in the process. We mourn with profound sadness the death of Benazir Bhutto. The people of Pakistan have paid their tribute to her memory in their own way.

I would like to assure the newly elected leadership in Pakistan that we seek good relations with Pakistan. India wants to live in peace with Pakistan. The destinies of our two countries are interlinked. We need to put the past behind us, We need to think about our collective destiny, our collective security, and our collective prosperity. In their first pronouncements after the elections, leaders of the main political parties in Pakistan have also spoken of their interest in developing close relations with us, and working with us to bring about a durable peace. indeed the dialogue we have resumed with the Government of Pakistan over the last few years was started when the late Mrs. Benazir Bhutto and Shri Rajiv Gandhi were Prime Ministers. The most courageous steps to build peace were taken by Prime Minister Nawaz Sheriff and Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. We have continued this process with President Musharaff. I have said before and I say it again that I have a vision for the future of India and Pakistan. I believe that in both countries there is a consensus that we must have close and cooperative relations and a framework for enduring peace. I hope that the newly elected leaders in Pakistan can quickly move forward with us on this quest. I am sure that the House will want me to say that we would welcome this and meet them halfway.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, our hon , Member, Shri Arun Jaitley has said that this Government is a faceless and directionless Government, that it needs to be determined and decisive. I do not understand why our Government is being decorated with such colourful adjectives. The direction in which we have moved the country in the last four years is well laid out in the Address of hon. Rashtrapatiji. It is in direction of inclusive growth, It is in the direction of empowering the poor and marginalised sections of the society, whether they are *dalits*, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, or minorities. It is in the direction of unleashing the enterprise and creativity that is inherent in every citizen of this great country so that he or she can live up to his or her full potential .It is in the direction of taking everbody along and working to eradicate poverty, ignorance and disease. It is in a direction to enhance our citizens' security. I hope the direction is now clear for all to see.

Of course, I am aware that some Members have been wishing that this Government falls and this has been their wish since the day we came into office. To their misfortune and to the good fortune of the nation, this has not happened. But such fond dreams do not die easily. Therefore, they continue to see visions where none exist.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the future beckons India. I seek from leaders, of all political parties, a long term vision and commitment that will enable us to widen our development options. The task is challenging indeed difficult. There will be vested interests in our way. Gandhiji once said and I quote, "Whenever you take a step forward, you are bound to disturb something.

You disturb the air as you go forward, you disturb the dust, the ground. You trample upon things, When a whole society moves forward this trampling is on a much bigger scale; and each thing that you disturb, each vested interest which you want to remove, stands as an obstacle."

I seek a commitment to the nation's best long-term interests, so that we move forward to build an inclusive India. Let us not divide ourselves by adopting narrow perspectives on important national policies. It is this perspective that informs the President's Address this year. I am therefore, happy to express my sincere gratitude to the hon. Rashtrapatiji for her Address to Parliament.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I shall now put...

SHRIMATI BRINDA KART: Sir, may I seek a clarification from him?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, we have no intention of showing any disrespect to the hon. President because what follows is an expression of gratitude to the hon. President. Because the reply has been absent of conviction...*(Interruptions)*...

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

Sir, I need a translation of what Shri V. Narayanasamy said just now. So , I wish to say that because we have no assurance of either Ram Setu or Women's reservation and there is no chance...*(Interruptions)* ...we are unable Sir,...*(Interruptions)*

(At this stage, some hon. Members left the Chamber.)

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, I want to seek a clarification. *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall now put the amendments which have been moved to vote. Amendment Nos. 1 to 45. Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi. *(Interruptions)*

SHRIMATI BRINDA LARAT: Sir, if you don't mind may I seek a clarification. Sir, you have used the words, 'as soon as possible' in connection with the women's reservation Bill. I appreciate the problems that you are facing since one of the UPA partners is not supporting you on this issue. But as you know, Sir, unless this Bill is passed in this Session itself, there is no chance of women getting one-third reservation before the next Lok Sabha elections. Therefore, Sir, this is a historic opportunity for women of this country and this Government will be held solely responsible if this opportunity is missed. So , Sir, my clarification is: would you kindly give a concrete assurance to the House that it will be done in this Session itself? Thank You.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I appreciate the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member. I cannot say what will be the outcome of our efforts. But I will make sincere efforts to go back to all the political parties...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Sir, I am only appealing to the Prime Minister that please assure this House, Sir, that you will set a date when you will call all the parties, we will discuss this issue and immediately do this.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Parliament will be dispersing on the 20th of March. As soon as we disperse, I would arrange to call all the political parties to express.

SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: In the intervening period? *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall now put the amendments which have been moved to vote. Amendment Nos. 1 to 45, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi.

Amendment Nos. 1 to 45 were negatived.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall, now, put Amendments (Nos. 86 to 88) moved by Smt. Sushma Swaraj to vote. She is absent.

Amendments (Nos. 86 to 88) were negatived.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall, now, put Amendments (Nos. 89 to 120) moved by Shri Pyarelal Khandelwal to vote. He is not present.

Amendments (Nos. 89 to 120) were negatived.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall, now, put Amendments (Nos. 121 to 123) moved by Shri Rajnath Singh to vote. He is not present.

Amendments (Nos. 121 to 123) were negatived.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall, now, take up Amendments (Nos. 124 to 143) moved by Shri Mahendra Mohan. Mr. Mahendra Mohan, are you moving or are you withdrawing your Amendments?

श्री महेन्द्र मोहन (उत्तर प्रदेश): Thank you very much, hon'ble Deputy Chairman. महोदय, मैं केवल इतना ही कहना चाहता हूँ कि प्रधान मंत्री जी ने जो स्पष्टीकरण दिये हैं, उनको सामने रखते हुए मैं यह चाहता हूँ कि विमेन रिजर्वेशन; किसानों का जो उत्पाद है, उसके लिए उन्हें और अच्छा मूल्य दिया जाए जिससे कि भविष्य में किसानों के ऊपर ऋण न बढ़े तथा किसानों की उपेक्षा न हो; जो क्षेत्रवाद हमारे यहाँ फैल रहा है, उत्तर भारतीयों के साथ महाराष्ट्र में जो हुआ है, इस प्रकार की चीजें न हों; महंगाई कम हो, रोजगार बढ़े ... (व्यवधान)... चिकित्सा में जिस प्रकार की औषधियाँ और नकली दवाइयाँ चल रही हैं, वे रोकी जाएँ; बच्चों के बाल श्रम को सही किया जाए। इन चीजों की ओर सरकार और ध्यान दे। सरकार पानी, शिक्षा तथा पर्यटन के ऊपर थोड़ा और ध्यान दे। प्रधान मंत्री जी से इन्हीं बातों का अनुरोध करते हुए मैं अपने अमेंडमेंट्स को विद्वां करता हूँ।

Amendments (Nos. 124 to 143) were, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall, now, put Amendments (Nos. 154 to 158) moved by Shri Sharad Anantrao Joshi to vote. He is absent.

Amendments (Nos. 153 to 158) were negatived.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I shall, now, put Amendments (Nos. 160 to 167) moved by Shri Shreegopal Vyas to vote. He is absent.

Amendments (Nos. 160 to 167) were negatived.

श्री अमर सिंह (उत्तर प्रदेश): उपसभापति महोदय, CACP और स्वामीनाथन रिपोर्ट के बारे में इस सरकार ने कोई मतव्य नहीं दिया है। इसके प्रतिवाद में हम वाक आउट करते हैं ... (व्यवधान)... किसानों के मामले में ... (व्यवधान)...

(तत्पश्चात् कुछ मानवीय सदस्य सदन से बाहर चले गए)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, I put to vote the Motion of Thanks.

The question is:

"That the Members of Rajya Sabha assembled in this Session are deeply grateful to the President for the Address which she has been pleased to deliver to both the Houses of Parliament assembled together on February 25, 2008."

The motion is adopted.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We shall, now, take up Special Mentions.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

Demand to declare underground fire in Jharia Coal Field a National Disaster

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT (West Bengal): Sir, I draw the special attention of the House towards the situation prevailing in 600 square kilometres of Jharia Coal Field area affecting 7 lakh people in Jharkhand and Raniganj Coalfield area in West Bengal due to underground fire having serious social, economic, infrastructural and environmental consequences.

Recently, I visited several places of Jharia fire affected area and seen men, women and children living in area where poisonous gas is emitting, subsidence is taking place and underground fire coming out. Several railway tracks are under threat. Railway line and station through Jharia have already been closed. The RSP College in Jharia with its 6000 students and Jharia's Central Water Supply in 'Zone-1', according to the report of the Central Mining Research Institute, is under serious threat stating 'the rate of progress of fire in zone-1 is in the range of 8-3 metre per month'.

Presently, the matter is being handled by the Coal Ministry through Coal PSUs, ECL and BCCL as operating agencies. The lackadaisical approach of Coal Ministry can be seen in the notice issued by BCCL to Jharia College to shift from its present location as they 'deem fit'. Thus, lakhs of affected people have become victims on both counts.

I urge the Central Government to consider such a disaster as a national disaster and act accordingly before a huge tragedy occurs. I request the Prime Minister to personally intervene to ensure formation of co-ordinating bodies of all concerned Union Ministries and Stated Governments aiming at protecting lives and livelihood of all sections of affected people, environment and areas by controlling underground fire as far as possible and wherever required, resettlement and rehabilitation of all sections of affected people. Thank you.

Request to continue the CGHS facilities to accredited Journalists and their Families

श्री अली अनवर (बिहार): महोदय, केन्द्र सरकार द्वारा पीआईबी से मान्यता प्राप्त पत्रकारों को सीजीएचएस की सुविधा काफी पहले से दी जाती रही है। इस सुविधा की शुरूआत स्व. प्रधान मंत्री श्री राजीव गांधी जी ने की थी, जिसके तहत वरिष्ठ पत्रकारों एवं उनके परिवार के लोगों को स्वास्थ्य-सुविधा दी गई थी। लेकिन यह अत्यंत खेद की बात है कि उनसे यह सुविधा छीनी जा रही है। विगत अप्रैल से उनके कार्ड का नवीनीकरण नहीं किया जा रहा है। दुःख की बात तो यह है कि जिन राजीव गांधी जी ने इस योजना का आरम्भ किया था, आज उन्हीं के दल की सरकार पत्रकारों से इस सुविधा को छीन रही है। इसमें विरोधाभास तो यह है कि संसदीय प्रश्न के उत्तर में सरकार एक ओर तो यह कह रही है कि यह सुविधा वापस नहीं ली गई है, जबकि दूसरी ओर उनके कार्ड का नवीनीकरण बंद कर दिया गया है। जितने पत्रकार