

RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 19th February, 2001/30 Magha, 1922 (Saka)

The House met at twenty-six minutes past one of the clock,

MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

The National Anthem, "Jana Gana Mana," was played.

MEMBER SWORN

Shri Shyam Lal (Uttar Pradesh)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Laid on the Table

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the President's Address to both the Houses of Parliament assembled together on the 19th February, 2001.

[Text of the Address delivered by the President (Shri K.R. Narayanan)]

Honourable Members,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this first session of Parliament in 2001. I extend to you my best wishes for the successful completion of the budgetary and legislative business ahead.

This session of Parliament is being held under the grim shadow of the devastation caused by the earthquake that struck Gujarat last month. It claimed thousands of lives, destroyed public and private property worth thousands of crores, and left many people homeless. Today, we pay our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. We assure them and all others affected by the earthquake that they are not alone in this hour of loss and suffering. The entire nation has rallied behind and demonstrated its sympathy and solidarity. The tragedy has evoked the response of Governments, NGOs, and multilateral agencies across the world to contribute generously to our national effort. My Government and the people of India express their deep gratitude to all of them.

The Union Government and the Government of Gujarat have been working closely in the relief and rehabilitation operations throughout the State. I compliment the jawans and officers of the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy for their outstanding role in this effort. The Governments of all the