

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES OFFICIAL REPORT IN THE
HUNDRED AND EIGHTY THIRD SESSION OF THE

RAJYA SABHA

Commencing on the 25th March, 1998/4th Chaitra, 1920 (Saka)

RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 25th March, 1998/4th Chaitra, 1920 (Saka)

The House met at sixteen minutes past twelve of the clock Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

(The National Anthem was played.)

ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have to inform Members that the Prime Minister has nominated Shri Sikander Bakht as the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha.

ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have to inform Members that I have recognised the Indian National Congress [Congress (I)] Party in the Rajya Sabha as the Opposition party and its leader Dr. Manmohan Singh as the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Laid on the Table

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I beg to lay on the table a copy (in English and Hindi) of the President's Address to both the Houses of Parliament assembled together on the 25th March, 1998. [Placed in Library, See No. LT-2/98]

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

Hon'ble Members,

I have great pleasure in addressing this first session of both Houses of Parliament after the 12th General Election to the Lok Sabha. I extend my warm felicitations to the members of the new Lok Sabha.

I thank the Election Commission of India for conducting the General Election with despatch and efficiency.

The just concluded mid-term election

reflected the firm conviction of our people in democratic processes of change. Contrary to forecasts that the turnout would be low, in fact, nearly 62 per cent of the electorate exercised their franchise. The results are indicative of regional aspirations seeking a place in the national perspective. My Government will ensure the fulfilment of these aspirations even while looking after national interests.

Parliamentary arithmetic alone cannot provide the key to good governance. That key lies in the willingness of all to rise above notions of parliamentary majority and minority and work in a spirit of cooperation, conciliation and consensus. My Government, imbued with this spirit, will chart a new course in governance that seeks to unify and not divide: dialogue, debate and discussion will replace the narrow antagonisms of the past.

After the mid-term election, the nation now looks forward to a Government that will get down to business. This is precisely what the Government proposes to do: The most immediate tasks include the passage of the Supplementary Demands for 1997-98 and the Vote on Account for 1998-99. Thereafter, pending matters, including legislative business, will be taken up in right earnest.

Starting now, all our efforts will be directed at building a New India—an India free from the triple-curse of insecurity, hunger and corruption; an India free from illiteracy and disease; an India where more and more people are gainfully employed; an India where every citizen, irrespective of his caste, creed or faith, feels proud to be an Indian.

Secularism is integral to India's traditions. My Government is unequivocally committed to upholding