

THE INTERIM BUDGET (GENERAL) 2009-10 — *Contd.*

DR. K. KESHAHA RAO (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I rise with all humility, more because my senior colleague, a learned colleague, whom I have been reading with passion all through my college days, is trying to find chinks in the armour, the armour which has been felt strong all over the country if not the world. Well, I know his love for semantics and now for theatrical presentations.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN) in the Chair.]

I cannot join his theatrical, but I will, certainly join his rhetoric to put forward my expressions, not so much to say about 'fallacies', because if he finds facts to be fallacious, that is left to him. But what I always thought is that the papers that are presented here are the Budget papers which are presented after great scanning. If you have found chinks in them, I need to go back to probe, instead of immediately joining issue with you. But I sympathise with the Member also because they have been given a Budget, but not provided with a chance to speak on the Departmental demands. You would have then got all the time to speak on the Departments. I always felt being treated to some kind of economic philosophies here during the Budget Sessions right from our Sengupta's Keynesian, classicism to neo-liberalism via Mrs. Brinda's Marxism reaching pragmatism. I thought you were trying to discuss some economic formulations. But if it is about the NHAI, or something like that its Chairman gets a two years or one year term, or, if it is something like the tenders are given on off-shoot or the shortroute methods, neither the Minister of Finance, even if he considers himself as a super Minister in the Government nor a Member here would be able to answer the details of any Department which functions under various independent Departments, although they get funds from the Ministry of Finance. Now, because a particular Department gets finances from the Finance Ministry, it does not make the Budget speak for all those things which go into the implementation part of it. Therefore, Sir, there is a clash between policy formulation and implementation. So, I would rather leave it at that.

Sir, I was really surprised when the hon. Member was talking about some particular thing. I would not go into the semantics. One may like to know as he refers whether electricity is becoming accessible to all or it has been slipped out in some places. I just don't know whether there is much of a difference between its accessibility to all and providing electricity to all. That means, tomorrow, you may say, provide electricity to my bedroom. And you will say, 'bedroom too.' So, this is some kind of a phraseology that you have been using as a Minister and the Government has been using it. All right. He said that it got slipped out in a particular context. If a particular tribal unit has slipped out or it is missing, there is a need to re-look or maybe to revisit the figures when the implementation really takes place.

I do not want to really get into that. But, nonetheless, I only think that these are a few things which do not add to the debate. Sir, last time, when the Budget was discussed, most of us expressed our doubts and apprehensions that we were heading towards some kind of a

stagflation. I had suggested that it might be treated with some kind of economic theories and you said, 'then the unemployment rate would go down, investment would go down and the public sector would suffer.' This was really bothering most of us. Most of us really agreed with you because of the kind of meltdown to which we were exposed. But there is a need to look back to ourselves today because the taste of the pudding is in its eating. If the Budget is to speak about the NHAI or about the tendering methods, etc., leave that apart, let us think of policy formulations. In an economic situation like this where there are difficult situations, the Finance Minister, perhaps, to my mind, was thinking of these extraordinary situations, requiring extraordinary measures. He was referring not only to FRBM, but he was also referring to what you are now suggesting. Please re-visit, re-design the entire formulations so much so that tomorrow when you are coming with a full Budget, you will be able to answer these. For example, I will take up the real strong objection which Mr. Yechury took during the Supplementary Budget. He did mention some subjects on which the Left had pressed the Government to take a particular stance or stand. He pointed out three or four things where the Government faltered and which he felt has cost the country a lot. Just like that, yesterday, Brindaji was trying to tell us about the FDI. As the Finance Minister has said, the confidence of the foreign investors has not gone down in spite of all the meltdown of which you are talking about. Nonetheless, there are certain sectors, particularly retail sector, to which she referred, on which most of us, a man like me, would certainly have no objection. It is because, at times, when your foreign inflows have even fallen down to 20 per cent, I wonders what kind of funds are we expecting in retail, which is no more an industry but a community-oriented activity? These are the various issues which I can quote. If we were to go to the Department and speak about it, we would have easily found fault as to how retail sector would be affected, if the FDI gates were opened. But on the formulations side, I would take a holistic approach. I would only talk about it at this particular time, not to speak of the very pertinent questions which Brindaji raised and which I raised earlier when the Standing Committee was discussing that subject. I am very much a part of it. When we were discussing it, we all sat together. I said that this cannot happen because through backdoor entry, a lot of single-branded goods store have already become a multibranded store. What we said, 'please do not touch these 2.5 crore people who are dependent on retailing, which is more a business culture of this country rather than a business activity.' Now, at that time, when the Standing Committee or even the Committees of this House were discussing it, we had come up with some kind of a guideline to which you have referred. But now some kind of an order had come through which we had tried to open the doors. I do not know what exactly would be the reaction of the House; that is the later part. But why I say this is; If we were to discuss a subject specific issue, and if it were to be brought directly under a bigger policy formulation framework, then we would have certainly answered it. Sir, I have great respect for Shri Arun Shourie. We had really thought that since unemployment was going up and since

we were discussing the Budget, we would reflect upon the situation. Before I go back to make my point clear, I totally agree with Shri Arun Shourieji to say that it is not the Budget that we are discussing, it is perhaps the speech of the hon. Finance Minister. I have also taken it in the same spirit because, as he says, he has constitutional constraints which prevent him from going in for a full Budget. Budget here means some kind of a social agenda, some kind of an instrument through which you would like to answer the entire societal needs. Since that is not coming up and, in the name of Vote of Account, you would just like to adjust certain figures here and there, maintaining the earlier balance, with nominal increases or the same thing being continued to ensure continuum and also to ensure the same level, maybe a bit less or more, are taken forward — since that is the idea of the “Interim Budget” or the “Vote-on Account” — let us not really make an issue of the figures so much because they are before us. But the management of economy and the formulations of policy become somewhat tricky in situations like this. That is where a lot of job losses occur and public expenditure not going to sectors where it would be of help. As you said, 25 per cent of the exports contribute to the GDP. They would go down; but they had actually gone up. All these require really extraordinary, bold initiatives. The Finance Minister had said in the last para of his speech about there and had even advised that such and such thing should be done, and, at the same time, not denying the present Budgetary figures, the expenditure or allocations which would help employment, through activities like infrastructure and rural development. This has been taken care of. Whatever it is, I understand that this is the last Session of the 14th Lok Sabha. It would end, giving 15th Session. Naturally, every Member would like to bring politics into budgetary debates like this, or the diatribe that you are indulging; all that is acceptable. I would like to quote here what Paul Krug had said, “One election will not make a trend”. The trend has to be a continued one, for a longer time. What we have achieved during the last five years is something which is really spectacular, but with its own shortcomings, which need to be revisited. The question, therefore is, not the lack of intention, but the lack of implementation and a regular monitoring machine. This needs to be looked into. If this trend is allowed to continue, and I am sure will be allowed by the people to continue, with the same UPA coming again, all the shortcomings that we have been talking about, not only being talked about at this particular point of time, but even during the last four years, will certainly be taken note of. As I have said, many of these are good. I would even like to thank the Left Parties which have suggested in many an instance things which have helped us — except for reasons better known to them for why they had withdrawn support on Indo-US Nuclear Deal which had nothing to do with economics. They had brought too much of politics into it. Nonetheless, we welcome the changes in economic policy that they had been suggesting. This has been the brunt of the entire speech given by Shri Sitaram Yechury while speaking on the Resolution thanking the President. I

am only trying to respond to that and agree that it is not giving the “devil its due” but it is the “angel acknowledged”. Let us all agree today that many of the suggestions that the Left friends have given have helped not only this party but also the country to ward off many pitfalls into which it would have otherwise fallen. Sir, I wish to refer to the apprehensions that you have raised, the figures that you have doubted and the figures laid on the Table. In this connection, let us take pride in one thing. Whatever be our political stance, here or there and whatever be the political rhetoric and doubts let not the man in the street be victimised through our demoralised rhetoric. The Indian economy is robust, its buoyancy is really great and we are great in many aspects. The very fact that at a time when the entire West is saying that it is melting down, we have maintained 7 per cent growth rate. The Finance Minister says today on the floor of the House that it will be maintained at 7 per cent. It is such a pride. It was 9 per cent for the last four years. Nonetheless, at a time when every economy is falling, getting shattered, maintaining 7 per cent growth is not because of any measure that we have taken this year but because of continuous measures that we have been taking for the last four years. You were talking about liberalisation. But whenever we needed some kind of a social control, over such liberalisation we had indulged in. These things have taken us from ideological regimentation to what today is pragmatism. We looked into the area it has served. As I said, the taste of the pudding is in its eating. Today when you look back to what has happened to this country, what is available in this country, you would all agree, the achievement and record of this country as far as economy is concerned, is appreciable. It cannot be studied isolated from that of our social life, that of social stratification, that of a socio democratic evolution and that of social imbalances. We all know that India’s economy is the third largest today in Asia. We were growing at 9.1 per cent for the last four years. I am not trying to talk immediately about this year alone. Because of economic meltdown we have really come down. But even with 7 per cent growth, we are next to China. Therefore, there is no scope, according to me, for despair or reversal in the strength of our economy. In sixty years of our Independence there has never been a reversal, although there were shortcomings during the sixty years of Independence. There might have been many fluctuations in the investments and savings rate, but never a complete reversal. Sir, I come to other concerns as reflected in the Presidential debate because during that debate every number was trying to talk about the economy of this country, in context of the meltdown. Nobody really took up other issues. So, I am really referring to them. Nobody denies the fact that global economy impacts us. Although Mr. Arun Shourie, says that we said that ‘it will not affect us,’ I don’t think anybody has said that global meltdown or slowdown will not affect India. What all that we said is, it will not impact us as much as you fear because our fundamentals are good. It is not that Japanese, Brazilian or Mexican fundamentals, that we are referring to, are not good. But they have really started shaking in their own shoes as compared to us. Their economy has gone

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down to 3.2 per cent but we are at 7 per cent. That is why our fundamentals are good. When we use the word 'fundamental', it is only to say that our base institutional response is quick, our response to other needs and economics is comprehensive. Now, again, we must agree that ours is a consumption and demand-oriented economy. I am referring to Mr. Yechury who said very strongly pleaded how we might go down tomorrow because the way the speculation and all other forward trading activities were going on. But, let me say that we join issue with him and say that our economy is consumer demand-oriented, and as he himself agrees, we have the demographic dividend on our side with 46 per cent of the population being less than 25 years of age. We have the advantage of young manpower. If the Government goes out all the way to invest in its public expenditure goals in the employment-oriented sectors, that would allay his fears. That is what exactly is said the entire thing in both, the Vote on Account and also the last 2-3 paragraphs where future guideline is given to the Ministry of Finance. That is how I am looking into the entire papers that are presented. You have said, "It is not a Budget; not even an Interim Budget.". I know it could be what we have done, what we have achieved give us pride, why should not we be proud of them. You have referred to the promises that have not been fulfilled. But, the moment you said, "promises not fulfilled", I was recollecting the promises that we made. I know the promises that we made four years back when we came to power. One was that we would maintain a growth rate of 7-8 per cent per year. Can anybody tell me that we have not maintained this? I am referring to only five promises to which the Minister referred. Then, the second promise was providing universal access to quality basic education and health. Then, again, you will say access is not fulfilment. The access to education is not that we thrust it in the throat of a pupil, but you have to develop his interest in education. Tell me if there are any shortcomings in this. Our investment in knowledge has grown by 300 per cent in 2009 as compared to 2004. Only yesterday, we have passed a Bill for 15 new Central universities. We have eight new IITs coming up. Then, we have *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and our new projects in education. These should be taken note of. I think, perhaps, the Bill on universal access and right to education is coming tomorrow and that will also be passed. Then, our other promise was to generate gainful employment and promote investment. Investments have really gone up by 78 per cent. It is true that during this meltdown, they have slowed down. They have shown some kind of lack in strength. But, at the same time, they show buoyancy as far as investments are concerned. But, this is another matter. Mrs. Brinda Karat and Mr. Yechury are my friends by the Left. They might say that it must also have some kind of direction. This is why exactly we need to revisit and redesign few things when we find that it is affecting the economy. Sir, the third thing is assuring hundred days' employment. Now, you have brought the figures of the CAG. The CAG is a man who deals with the figures. I deal with the vision. It is not the vision of the figures. It is the vision of tomorrow's economy, the people. It

is quite possible that hundred days may fall to six per cent because it could be 99 days. Let the statistics not become static tricks. The figure of 6 per cent had really shocked me, because only two days back, the Minister was giving different figures. He said that it was 36 per cent in few places. I have not counted the average. But, it is coming to somewhere 36 per cent, that is, for hundred days. One point which Mr. Arun Shourie certainly agrees, the moment I am exposed to a benefit, if I do not take its advantage the next day, do not think I am denied of it; but I don't need it. It is quite possible where I am working with you for hundred days for Rs. 60-100, in a rainy season, I can go and work anywhere else. If a man is already exposed to the benefits, then, he is not there not because he do not know it, and it does not mean that he is denied. Coming to focus on agriculture, after all this years, the 2.4 per cent lacklustre growth has today reached 4.0 per cent, although Sharad Pawarji says that it would reach 4.5 per cent. Whether it is 4.5 or 4.0 it is significant, Sir, agriculture is core of our economy, without which we have no economy.

Sir, coming to fiscal consolidation and reforms, I would like to speak on the point raised about fiscal consolidation and fiscal mismanagement. Sir, give me one example in this country during the last five years, or, at least, during the last one year, when you had this meltdown felt severely; where any bank has tried to close down or pull down its shutters because of lack of funds. Give me one example where any bank wanted you to guarantee their funds or guarantee their loans. Give me one example where the banks wanted the Government associated funds like the bailouts in the US; the Citibank bailout running into billion dollars. When our financial institutions are insulated from such melt down, how can you say that we have mismanaged the financial institutions or financial issues?

Short scrips or the stock-exchange bites, all these would tell us that neither have we faulted nor have we gone astray in this field. I have got some figures. He referred to the share market. Sir, although our, markets have been taking a beating, and there is no doubt about it, yet, there have been no restrictions in short selling in equity market. Mr. Chandrasekhar Saheb will tell me if it is not there. There was no halting on trading in the market on any day. Please contrast it with what is happening worldwide. So, at this time, you have all this with you, you have the banks intact, and, you have the markets intact. I am not saying that they are as strong as you want them to be, but I want you to look at them in context of what exactly is happening around. I can understand criticism. But this kind of cynicism makes even the father of cynicism, 'Danish' hang his head in shame.

I am trying to talk to you not because of politics; but the economics. A country like ours with this kind of buoyancy, when it is going ahead and trying to face all kinds of onslaughts from all around and must be hailed, as per the figures given by you when, from the expected 100 per cent, it has come down to 82 per cent in these odd days against all those odds, we must rather try to take pride and see that if necessary we revisit those figures. It calls not only a mid course

correction but asks for a thorough, drastic and bold redesigning of things, and, that is what we talked about when we said, “extraordinary situation requires extraordinary things.”

Sir, this is what I wanted to mention with reference to that particular issue. Whether you call it Budget or Vote-on-Accounts or whatever phrases or semantics you indulge in, I will not go into it. I would like to conclude by saying that one thing is sure that it has done better than what, at least, we expected. The moment we talked about the Constitutional constraints and that the figures would come out like this only and they would be readjusted with the incremental cases. But, we do not dare enough to speak about the sectors which needed the attention of the Finance Minister.

Today, we are seeing a number of programmes like NREGP, programme of infrastructure, programmes of roads and textiles etc. Firstly, all these are labour oriented. Even if the exports are going down, the two per cent subsidy is given, and, when we talk about agriculture, still the agriculture project is being taken into note even during the Vote-on-Account. And, funds are being given to them not to speak of the debt waiver that we have given, not to speak of the 25 per cent Vikas Programmes that we have given, not to speak of the Rs. 13,000 that we have given for offset suicides, not to speak of the Rs. 10,000 crores that we had already given for 13 States for special plans. Yet, we have provided many more things to double what is known as live-wire of agriculture, that is, the agriculture credit. When the agriculture credit had been doubled for the next one year, that means we have taken care of needs till the new Finance Minister is in place and is able to take necessary action. And, that is why, whether Sharad Pawarji says 4.5 or not, based on these allocations, based on these funds, we today feel that agriculture growth would be somewhere near 4 per cent. That should give us satisfaction, Sir, the kind of funds that we are giving, I am trying to talk because how these one given, the kind of funds we are giving for irrigation, road connectivity, IT, Textiles, are the productive policy matters. I don't want to give more reasons. I am only trying to talk about the total gamut policy formulation. The items in a Vote on Account which are included are only to see that we stem the kind of the slow down, the kind of the economic shattering. That is how in spite of this being a Vote on Account, it still took note of the issues that should sustain us some more time and also guide the future Finance Minister. And, I tell you this with the proud achievement that we have made. Somebody was referring to you like someone said ‘we can’. And that everybody shouted back saying ‘we can’ for a change. We said ‘we can.’ I say that we have already said that we could and we did. So, let us not get back to say ‘we can’. We have already done and we will continue to do. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI (Kerala): Thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity. At the outset, after keenly following the announcements of the Finance Minister yesterday in the other House, I want to say that this Interim Budget proposals, inclusive of the recent announcements of yesterday, clearly show the insensitivity of the Government towards the vast majority of people in this country. Why am I saying this? There is a trend in the Government circles to delay the

reality in our real economy now. The need actually is to address that. Yesterday's announcements for 'J' class passengers, restaurant people and consumer durables, I am not denying them. But how much the ordinary people are going to benefit out of that? Focussing on employment, on the price rise issue, what this Government has actually extended through these measures? I can say the real happening in the employment sector of this country is very, very pathetic. Take one after another in our industry sector. Say, textile or handicrafts or traditional industries, in all these sectors, massive unemployment is occurring. Our Labour Ministry comes out with a study which is saying 'six lakh jobs only hitherto scrapped out'. But actually the situation is very serious. This is happening because of our export-oriented strategy for the last some decades. Now, it is completely in a setback position. Naturally, recession means an economy is leading to a situation where the demand is in a crunch. Raising demand and enhancing the people in terms of purchasing power is the real issue, and that is not addressed by this Government. That is the point number one I want to make here. Further, on prices, focus on the question of grains. Where does our PDS stand? The Government is celebrating piling up of stocks of food grains. That is a good thing. But what is the real situation of the people on the ground? The structure of the PDS is totally demolished by this Government. In the APL category, the off-take is reduced to 73 per cent. Kerala is the worst affected State. I can say it from my own experience. Allowing people to purchase grain for their daily need at an affordable price, is a question where the Government has not extended any measure, not even a single measure.

In the area of unemployment, actually, now we have to look into our domestic market expansion. Since the export setback is going to continue for some more time, our Finance Minister rightly said the real impact of recession is not unfolded yet. Correct. But hitherto available symptoms are a lesson for us. You have to involve and engage with that.

I do not know whether the Government is aware of the suicides taking place in Gujarat. Jewel polishing workers are committing suicide because of this kind of situation. In Namakkal, Tamil Nadu, workers are selling kidney to survive. In Tirupur, 60,000 people are out of job because of non-protection from closures. In Moradabad, a good number of handicapped workers are now jobless. So, the need is demand creation within the country and relief to the people who are out of job. Even the remuneration of the retained workers has gone down. It is sharply cut. What I am saying is, to enhance the purchasing power of the people and to create a better demand in the economy, we need to give boost to the economy which is at the crossroads. It is not a serious matter and concern for the Government, it appears. It is a very sorrowful state of affairs.

Another thing I want to say is this. Yesterday, the Minister said, 'empowerment of women a mission or a new programme.' What we did so far to that sector is that we really disempowered our entire women folk by denying them proper representation even in Parliament or other bodies.

After disempowering women *in toto* for decades and, even till now, not willing to take it up properly, what are we talking about? What is it? It is a clear mockery.

Another thing which I want to know is this.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): Don't you know Brindaji can represent all women?

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Sir, I am focussing on a real question which demands urgent attention. Today, Obama made another speech. I want to cite that example for the purpose of Government. Today, too, Obama declared further stimulus package there. Which are the sectors? One is job creation. Other is public health. And the other one is education. Our Government's stimulus package is very, very low. As rightly said by Arun Shourieji, it is too late, too little.

The FRBM is a pointer always in discussion. According to the Budget Speech, we are now revising our estimate of fiscal deficit to six per cent which was anticipated as 2.5 per cent. For the next year, we are again expecting 5.5 per cent. I think it will go further. I am not worried about it. In this kind of situation, it is the responsibility of the Government to act according to the necessity of the economy and its people. In such a situation, instead of yesterday's announcement, focus should be on infrastructure. In infrastructure, we have some programmes now, mainly through PPP route. I am not that enthusiastic about that route. Viability and gap funding is the main tool in that. Our infrastructure focus should go to the agrarian sector of this country where the Government can invest massive funds irrespective of the FRBM which we already practically bypassed. So, massive investment is the question now. Which are the other countries which are doing that? What is China showing now? They are spending seven per cent of their GDP consecutively for two years on infrastructure and public health. What we did so far? Less than one per cent of our GDP! That is not correct. So, we are now in an extraordinary situation. That demands extraordinary actions which are lacking by this Government. I don't think the people of this country are going to spare the UPA or the Congress Party for this inaction.

Sir, it is very interesting to go through certain documents now available. The recent Human Development Report by the United Nations listed India at 128th position among 177 countries. That shows the divide. education Further, among the top richest individuals in the world, four are from India; only two are from Japan. Their per capita income is fifty times higher than India's. It shows, how our corporate people are gathering money through various means and the police are encouraging them. This divide is a question to be addressed.

Sir, I am suggesting a special package for textile industry. Yet another point I want to cite is, overseas employment and our people who are working abroad. Massive return is happening now. The worst affected State is Kerala. And, thousands and lakhs are coming back to India. A good chunk of it is from Kerala. For this particular phenomenon, what is the reply of the Government? Whether the Government is aware or concerned about it. Is there any package for

their rehabilitation, reemployment, subsistence and revival? Government is not taking any measure. Kerala is a State which is affected severely because of multiple reasons. Cash crop prices are coming down; overseas employment is drastically getting down; Government revenues are coming down. In the area of economic federalism where the States are now affected severely because of the meltdown, what innovative measures are suggested by this Government to help the States in terms of financial ability? Nothing is coming out. So, that area is to be addressed properly.

Another thing I want to speak on is the real situation of each and every State in the background of the recent developments in the economic situation. And, it is to be done urgently. Otherwise, they may not be able to carry out their responsibilities in terms of welfare measures, not only the new ones, but also the running ones cannot be pulled further. That is the situation which these States are facing. I am speaking about the real situation of Kerala. In the recent Budget in Kerala, as an alternative measure, massive investment in infrastructure is proposed and new welfare measures are also initiated. To carry out such things in a successful fashion in the democratic set-up, in the federal system, we have to see the real pains of the States. That is also a point to be taken seriously. Another thing I want to speak on is infrastructure itself and job creation. Now, we have some experience of the National Rural Employment Scheme and as a programme, it has benefited a lot. I am not undermining the shortcomings that have happened. They can be rectified in future also. But a massive expansion in terms of spreading that to the entire country, all districts, irrespective of rural and urban areas, is a very important thing. Another thing is that the number of work days can also be enhanced. An underdeveloped country can carry out immense new programmes in the rural infrastructure development where we can accommodate all these jobless people, and the remuneration should also be enhanced. Enhancement of remuneration will directly contribute to the enhancement of the purchasing power of the people thereby to create a demand, thereby to boost the economy that much. So, in the employment generation, one focus is infrastructure, and instead of suggesting a direct investment by the Government and a massive expansion, there is a need for universalization of the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. With these words, I conclude. Thank you very much.

श्री बृजभूषण तिवारी (उत्तर प्रदेश): उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, जो अंतरिम बजट पेश किया गया है, इसके बारे में शुरु से ही मीडिया ने इतनी हवा बांधी थी कि लगता था कि कोई बहुत बड़ी घोषणा सरकार की तरफ से की जाएगी और इस मुद्दे पर अभी सदन में भी यह बात कही गई कि पूरा बजट लाना चाहिए था और जो लोगों को सुविधाएं प्रदान की जानी चाहिए थीं, वे इस बजट में कहीं नहीं हैं। परन्तु, मैं वित्त मंत्री जी के उस बयान का समर्थन करता हूं जिसमें उन्होंने ठीक ही कहा कि जो अगले चार महीने के चालू खर्च हैं, उनको ही दृष्टि में रखकर यह अंतरिम बजट लाया गया है। कोई नयी नीति या नयी राहट की घोषणा यदि हम करते, तो आगामी जो भी सरकार बनेगी, उसके वित्त मंत्री को उस संबंध में अपनी नीति निर्धारित करनी पड़ेगी और उसके अनुरूप वे अपना बजट पेश करेंगे, हम उन पर कोई अतिरिक्त बोझ नहीं डालना चाहते, मैं उनकी इस बात से सहमत हूं। परन्तु, आज प्रश्न यह है कि हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था का जो संचालन रहा है और बजट के संबंध में जो कागजात हमको मिले हैं, यदि हम उनको देखते हैं तो हर क्षेत्र में हमें घाटा ही घाटा नज़र आता है। चाहे वह

विकास दर हो या कुछ और। 2007-08 में हमारी विकास दर जहां 9.3 प्रतिशत थी, आज वह घटकर 7.8 प्रतिशत पर आ गई है। कृषि, विनिर्माण, बिजली, गैस और जल आपूर्ति में भी 2007-08 की तुलना में 2008-09 में कमी आई है। कृषि, वानिकी और मात्स्यिकी के विकास में 2007-08 में जहां हम 4.9 प्रतिशत पर थे, वहां हम 2008-09 में 2.6 प्रतिशत पर आ गए। उद्योग का विकास 2007-08 में जहां 8 प्रतिशत था, वह 2008-09 में 4.8 प्रतिशत हो गया और सबसे बड़ी बात यह कही जा रही है कि मुद्रा स्फीति में काफी कमी आई है। 21 जनवरी तक मुद्रा स्फीति की दर 4.39 थी, जो इस सप्ताह घटकर 4.3 हो गई। परन्तु, 4.3 पर आने के बावजूद जो महंगाई कम होनी चाहिए थी, वह कम नहीं हुई। आज durable सामान के तो दाम घटे हैं, चाहे मोटर हो, टेलीविजन हो या दूसरे गेजेट्स हों, परन्तु जो जीवन की आवश्यक चीजें हैं, जैसे अनाज का दाम या जो आम आदमी के इस्तेमाल में, उपभोग में आने वाली चीजें हैं, उनके दामों में कोई कमी नहीं है। अभी बीच में सीमेंट के दाम घटे थे, पर अब फिर सीमेंट के दाम बढ़ गए हैं। इस प्रकार मुद्रा स्फीति की दर तो कम हुई है, मगर उसके अनुपात में जो महंगाई कम होनी चाहिए, वह महंगाई कम नहीं हुई। मान्यवर, सबसे बड़ी बात यह है कि आज हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था के सामने बड़ी चुनौतियां हैं, यह सही है कि आज विश्वव्यापी आर्थिक संकट है और उसका लाजिमी असर हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था पर भी पड़ा है। अब तक का हमारा जो संचालन था या अब तक हम जिस तरीके से अपनी अर्थव्यवस्था को चला रहे थे, हमको अब तक अपने पैरों पर खड़े हो जाना चाहिए था। यह मान्यता है कि यह पृथ्वी, शेषनाग के फन पर आश्रित है। मैं समझता हूं कि जिस प्रकार से यह मान्यता है कि यह पृथ्वी, शेषनाग के फन पर टिकी हुई है, उसी प्रकार से हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था, बाहर से आने वाली मुद्रा पर या कुछ इसी प्रकार की चीजों पर आधारित है, जो ठोस नहीं है, क्योंकि अगर ठोस होती, तो हम कम से कम अगर और कुछ नहीं कर सकते, लेकिन जो जीवन के लिए आवश्यक चीजें हैं, उन्हें उपलब्ध कराते। हम luxurious lifestyle नहीं चाहते, लेकिन कम से कम जो स्वस्थ जीवन-स्तर है, उसको हम पा सकते थे। इससे एक आदमी को कम से कम दो वक्त भरपेट भोजन मिल जाता, उसकी दवा का इंतजाम हो जाता, उसके बच्चों के लिए शिक्षा की व्यवस्था हो जाती, उसके लिए कपड़ों का इंतजाम हो जाता, लेकिन सब कुछ होने के बावजूद जो आंकड़े हमारे सामने हैं, वे बहुत ही भयानक हैं, बहुत ही डरावने हैं।

अभी इसी सदन में एक प्रश्न के उत्तर में यह बात कही गई थी कि करीब 23 करोड़ लोग ऐसे हैं, जो खाद्य असुरक्षा के शिकार हैं। आज आप जानते हैं कि हमारे देश में काफी बड़ी तादाद उन स्त्रियों की है, जो खून की कमी और कुपोषण की शिकार हैं। दुनिया में जितने बच्चे हैं, उनमें से सर्वाधिक कुपोषित बच्चों की संख्या हमारे देश में है। तो यह जो समस्या है, इसका निदान होना चाहिए। हमारी जो अर्थव्यवस्था है, हमारा जो आर्थिक विकास है, वह विस्तारमुखी नहीं है, सब लोगों को उस विकास में हिस्सा नहीं मिलता। हम कहते तो हैं कि हम inclusive growth के पक्षधर हैं, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं होता है। आज एक नया नारा, आम आदमी के बारे में चला है, लेकिन आम आदमी को महिमामंडित तो किया जाता है, जैसे मंदिर में देवता को महिमामंडित करते हैं या जैसे हनुमान को लड्डू चढ़ाया तो जाता है, लेकिन हनुमान जी, लड्डू नहीं खाते, लड्डू चढ़ाने वाले या उस हनुमान मंदिर के जो मालिक होते हैं, वे लोग ही सारे लड्डू हड़प कर जाते हैं। इसी प्रकार से आम आदमी की बहुत पूजा होती है, बहुत सराहना होती है, लेकिन आम आदमी, दिन-दिन लुटता जाता है, उसका शोषण होता जाता है।

महोदय, आज सबसे बड़ी समस्या बेरोजगारी, विषमता की है, और गरीबी की है, आज सबसे बड़ी समस्या क्षेत्रीय असंतुलन की है, क्योंकि आज यह जो विकास है, यह समग्र विकास नहीं है, यह केवल सीमित क्षेत्रों का विकास है, कुछ वर्ग विशेष के लोगों का विकास है। अगर कुछ वर्ग विशेष के लोगों का, सीमित क्षेत्रों का ही विकास होगा, तो यह समग्र विकास नहीं कहा जाएगा, और यदि समग्र विकास नहीं होगा, तो देश की एकता को भी हम सुरक्षित नहीं रख सकते। इसमें कृषि हमारा मुख्य साधन है। हम यह तो कहते हैं कि इस बजट में हमने कृषि के लिए आवंटन बढ़ा दिया है, लेकिन उस आवंटन का कितना फायदा हुआ है? जैसा कि

अभी शौरी साहब बता रहे थे कि हम विभिन्न मदों पर आवंटन तो बढ़ाते जाते हैं, लेकिन उस आवंटन का जो फायदा होता है, वह फायदा हमको नहीं मिलता। कृषि के बारे में भी यही स्थिति है। बहुत समय से यह मांग होती रही कि इसमें investment बढ़ना चाहिए, लेकिन इसमें investment बढ़ता नहीं और अगर हम कृषि को सुरक्षित, सुदृढ़ और संपन्न नहीं कर सकते, तो हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था किस समय झटका खा जाए, यह कहा नहीं जा सकता।

इसी के साथ ही साथ फिजूलखर्ची है, आर्थिक अपराध है, भ्रष्टाचार है। एक बार अमरीका के अर्थशास्त्री ने कहा था कि हम जो यह “stimulus package” देते हैं, उन्होंने बहुत अच्छा उदाहरण दिया था कि जैसे कोई मरीज अगर अस्पताल में भर्ती है और उसको खून चढ़ाना है, तो आप खून चढ़ाते जाइए, लेकिन यदि आपने उसकी internal bleeding को रोकने का काम नहीं किया, तो आप बोतल पर बोतल खून चढ़ाते जाइए, फिर भी वह मरीज स्वस्थ नहीं होगा। इसी प्रकार से हम जितने भी पैकेज दें, यदि उस पैकेज का लाभ आम आदमी को नहीं मिलता, आम आदमी को नौकरी नहीं मिलती, आम आदमी को विकास का फायदा नहीं मिलता.... सारा भ्रष्टाचार में चला जाता है, केवल अपव्यय और फिजूलखर्ची में चला जाता है, तो आप यह कैसे कल्पना कर सकते हैं कि उस विकास का सबको फायदा मिलेगा? ये मौलिक प्रश्न हैं। आज बैंकों की मानसिकता कैसी है, यह आप जानते हैं। जिला स्तर पर जो बैंक हैं या यह समझिए कि micro level पर इतना भ्रष्टाचार है कि जरूरतमंद लोगों को कर्जा नहीं मिलता है और आज की स्थिति में तो और भी नहीं मिलेगा। यह जो अमेरिका का संकट है, जो आर्थिक संकट है, इसके कारण अब नौकरी नहीं मिलने वाली है। ऐसी स्थिति में नए रोजगार के सृजन की बात तो छोड़ दीजिए, लेकिन इस सरकार को कम से कम इसकी जांच करा लेनी चाहिए कि जो लोग रोजगार में लगे थे, उनमें से कितने लोगों को रोजगार से हटाया गया। केवल ‘नरेगा’ का हल्ला मचाकर और ‘नरेगा’ का नारा लगाकर बेरोजगारी की समस्या का समाधान नहीं किया जा सकता है। सत्ता में जो लोग हैं या समाज के बड़े लोग हैं, उन पर भ्रष्टाचार के आरोप हैं। हम आज तक लोकपाल बिल नहीं ला पाए। बराबर इसकी चर्चा होती है। अगर हम कम से कम अपनी आर्थिक व्यवस्था या वित्तीय प्रबंधन को ठीक करना चाहते हैं तो जहां-जहां से loopholes हैं या जहां-जहां से bleeding हो रही है, हमें उन सुराखों को भरना पड़ेगा। हमें अपने देश में राष्ट्रीयता, समाजवाद और गरीब के प्रति सहृदयता का भाव पैदा करना पड़ेगा, तभी हम आर्थिक विकास में अपना योगदान कर सकते हैं और आज जो संकट है, उस संकट का मुकाबला कर सकते हैं। मैं इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ इस अंतरिम बजट के प्रावधानों का समर्थन करते हुए अपनी बात खत्म करता हूँ। बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

SHRI N. K. SINGH (Bihar): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I know that at this stage not much play is left, not much room for manoeuvre can be sought and the Finance Minister has played all his cards out. In a spirit of trying to make some constructive suggestions, which may be of some relevance to the Ministry of Finance in further fine tuning their policies in the course of the next three months as we move towards to see the contours of a new Budget by a new Government, let me make a few observations. I will make five observations.

The first relates to macro asymmetries. I don't want to go into the issues of policy or fiscal profligacy because, I think, it has been dealt with by other speakers. I do wish to say that clearly conventional economics has been turned upside down. Certainly, fiscal profligacy, high current account deficit, sowing seeds of incipient inflation, etc., are not dirty words any more. While we quite understand that exceptional situation demands exceptional actions, if you take off-Budget items into account, if you reckon with the off-Budget items, the fiscal deficit this year, by the Government's own admission, will clearly be in the region of 12-13 per cent. That incipient seeds

have been sown for inflationary pressures to build up, even though inflation may not be currently a worry. Therefore, we need to make sure that the Finance Ministry has a path of returning to reasonableness, to the path of some degree of fiscal responsibility. I also agree that, considering the large borrowings which fiscal-1, stimulus fiscal-2 and now fiscal-3 entail, these large borrowings will, to some extent, push up the cost of borrowing and mop up the kind of liquidity which has been eased up by a reduction in CRR and SLR, and by a reduction in the rates of repo and reverse repo. So, I think, there is a need to reconsider how these large borrowings are to be accommodated along with the objective of continued credit availability at costs which are affordable. On affordability of costs, I agree with that old maxim that you can take a horse to the water, but you can't make it drink. You have improved the liquidity of the banks, but the bank lending remains frozen and the cost of lending is unduly influenced by risk perceptions on what the risk of further lending is. How does the Ministry of Finance intend to manage these macro asymmetries, returning to the path of some degree of fiscal rectitude, ensuring that the increased availability of liquidity is made available to the actual consumers, really reducing the cost of credit? Access to external flows is really something which should be accelerated and further the overall management of the balance of payments is something which is consistent with the framework of macro economic stability. These are not easy asymmetries to reconcile and this represents really a serious macro economic challenge for the Finance Ministry even in the very short run.

My second point is, the Minister of Finance in yesterday's presentation, has given the States 0.5 per cent leeway in terms of the kind of excess which they can do them under the Fiscal Responsibility Act. I do believe that right now the ability of States to make quick disbursements is far greater than the ability of the Central Government. And, therefore, the headroom for the States to undertake this kind of a quick change in expenditure patterns; create gainful employment; undertake economic activity, is significantly higher than what it is in the Central Government. Therefore, this 0.5 per cent should be increased to 1 per cent of the GDP under the State Fiscal Responsibility Act. Further, Sir, in terms of the fact that the States have been burdened with the Sixth Pay Commission — Rs. 40,000 crore giveaway on revenues by way of fiscal stimulus-1 and 2 which you did and another Rs. 30,000 crores which you did — this Rs. 70,000 crores of giveaways and other kind of decline in revenue buoyancy, would significantly reduce the volume of taxes which are available to the States, which will put further pressure on State Governments in trying to meet the fiscal responsibility target. My second suggestion is to encourage State level fiscal stimulus package by accommodating the States which are in a better position to be able to quickly utilise funds to have quicker disbursements and to create more jobs, in a shorter period of time. Gainful services of higher employment, higher economic activity and higher quality job creation. And there should be no politics being played in the devolution of these funds. I, en passe, would like to mention the fact that many State Government proposals are remaining mired in the bureaucracy of different Ministries. I

would refer, for instance, to the fact that the two ambitious packages which were given for rehabilitation of the flood affected victims of Bihar, the victims of the ravages of this year's Kosi flood and last year's also, which many of my colleagues have alluded to in the earlier part of the discussion. That is something which can be revisited, that is something which can give immediate relief, that is something which can create immediate gainful employment. My first point therefore was about macro stability, Really if it is carried to its logical conclusion, would imply a further reduction in repo rates, reverse repo rates, CRR and SLR and signalling the banks for reduction of interest rates. My second point related to State level fiscal stimulus package which can really assist the Ministry of Finance in creating the kind of gainful activity. My third important point, rather a question, is: How relevant is the fiscal stimulus for a country and an economy like ours? I would like to just allude to the fact that from the data which has been provided to us in reply to various questions in Rajya Sabha, over Rs. 4,00,000 crores are locked up in public outlay projects. Out of 909 infrastructure projects worth Rs. 4,18,000 crores, 346 projects are running behind time. There are serious cost and time overruns leading to Rs. 35,000 crores. It is a telling story that in the Central sector alone, out of 516 Central sector projects, 207 projects are really running behind time. That in the NHDP-1, only 49 per cent of the laning has been completed; in the case of NHDP-2, 51 per cent and in the case of NHDP-3, only 9 per cent of the BOT contracts have been given. I can go on. Similar is the story of what is happening to the Indira Vikas Yojana and so many other related things. I can go on, Sir, to allude to the fact that in the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission, only 50 per cent of the money allocated has been spent so far. My basic point is that clearly the absorptive capacity of the economy, to be able to absorb large doses of public outlays, is shrinking since large value projects are running behind schedule. So, what can the Ministry of Finance do under the present circumstances? I think they can do several things. Firstly, the least I would have expected from the Ministry of Finance and from the Finance Minister, in his Budget speech, was to come up with some proposals, which can speed up project implementation, to utilise the money which is already embedded in the system. The second is, it should be able to simplify disbursement procedures, by working out with the CAG some way in which for the next three months, or, for the next one year, you simplify the processes, you simplify the procedures in which the money, which is already locked into the system, can begin to have its gainful multiplier effect on the economy. So, I think, the value of any stimulus is how quickly and how gainfully we can utilise the money which is locked in. My third point is that a combination of monetary and fiscal policy would need sectoral policy adjustments. If you want to really begin to kick-start the economy, certain sectors deserve special packages. An allusion had been made to what has been done for exports; you should have a special package for exports, a special package for housing, etc. Sector-specific package is something which the Ministry of Finance can consider even in the course of the next three months. My final point is that global outlook continues to remain

uncertain. The future expectations remain very bleak. There are no definite estimates of when we expect an upturn of the global economy, and to the extent that we are somewhat integrated with the global economy, and even if we wish to begin to decoupling ourselves — though decoupling is a fallacy — it will mean that consumption in this country would need to be boosted very significantly. And whether it can be done in terms of a slow economy with slow per capita income and slow growth of the overall GDP is something which is questionable. Nonetheless, we need to move beyond monetary and fiscal policy to undertake some considerations of structural policies in relation to the agricultural sector. We had talked about agriculture in rhetoric. But the genuine truth is that agriculture reforms still remain stalled. How to create manufacturing hubs which can create gainful employment? The example, which West Bengal has experienced, is a more important issue of how to have a credible policy on R and R which can have a different kind of land utilisation pattern, which can genuinely foster manufacturing hubs, the kind of other laws with which we are saddled with, say, the urbanisation laws, or, the laws relating to labour needs review. In the long run, if you want to stimulate consumption, we will have to look to some of these areas in which we have neglected action and on which I realise that nothing dramatic can happen in the next three months. Governments come and go, but the economy is continual. The Governments, which really fail to act in time, cannot pull rabbits out of the hat in times of crisis. Nonetheless, even Governments, like this, looking at the continuity of action, can take into consideration the four or five practical steps which I have brought before you and which I have mentioned for the consideration of the hon. Finance Minister. I do believe that even in the last few months, in the run-up to the elections, we can give some impetus and some start to the flagging growth momentum and arrest the steep decline which we are perceiving in multiple directions. Thank you.

DR. BIMAL JALAN (Nominated): Thank you very much, Sir, for giving me this opportunity.

I have had the great privilege of working with the present Finance Minister 27 years ago, when he first became the Finance Minister. I was, in the Ministry of Finance, involved in several Budgets with him and subsequently, with a number of other Finance Ministers. I was just thinking what I should be talking about. Obviously, I would not want to make any party political points, sitting in this bench; whatever I have to say should be non-party. So, I can assure the Finance Minister that whatever I say is not a criticism of his Budget or this Budget.

Sir, all of us have been involved, in some way or the other, either as spectators or directly, with a very large number of Budgets. Some budgets have succeeded and some have failed. Some have just passed through. I just wish to make a few points about the Budget process. The first important point is that somehow — and this is from the long-run point of view — we have to extricate ourselves from regarding the Budget as an event. The most important point that we should remember is that the Budget is annual. This is an Interim Budget; we are talking about

four months. When we have an annual Budget, there are issues that we are dealing with. There are some short-term issues, stimulus and so on, which I shall talk about. But most of the issues are long-term — the long-term issues of poverty alleviation; the long term issues of inclusive growth that all of us agree on; the long-term issues of low inflation that all of us agree on; the long-term issues of providing employment opportunities and delivering benefits and services to people. Everybody agrees on that; it does not belong to this side or that. So, these are long-term issues. And the Annual Budget should be the occasion to examine, to hold the Government accountable, and to see whether it was able to perform or not. But, unfortunately, every year, what we look for in a Budget is, some headline. We demand that some rates should be increased or be dropped. Otherwise, it becomes a non-event. Most media headlines have said that this Budget is a non-event because it is an Interim Budget. Even the Finance Minister was apologetic — if I may use the word — when he said that it was only an Interim Budget and that he was sorry that he could not do what he would have wanted to do. But what he would have done is, raise some rates, lower some rates, and so on and so forth.

So, Sir, my first suggestion to whichever Government comes to power, whether from this side or that side or central, and whenever it comes to power, is to see if it is possible for us to have a long-term fiscal policy that would provide a long-term vision of what the direct tax system is and what the indirect tax system is. And until there is a necessity, we should try and not make any fiscal changes in the Budget after a period of time. It may take three to four years. We need tax reforms very badly, not in terms of the rates, but in terms of simplifying and making the tax system

taxpayer-friendly. Today, if you look at direct taxes, the whole system is so complex. You have surtax; you have surcharge; you have fringe benefit tax; you have tax deducted at source, and many other things, that nobody understands. Nobody can file his or her own tax return by himself or by herself. You need some tax advisors. Thus, there are hundreds of taxes on different items. So, my first suggestion is, let us have a long-term fiscal policy that would make sure that all the subsequent budgets, after two or three years, of the next Governments, are non-events. Give us an opportunity to consider what we have been able to achieve in terms of the larger goals that all of us agree on by Government spending.

Sir, the second point is that there is no accountability at all in terms of budgets. This is, again, not a party political issue. There is no accountability. We just hear that Revised Expenditure could be high or it could be low. It may differ. Ministries may spend, Ministries may not spend. They can spend whatever they want to; they may not spend what they don't want to and they can do anything they want. So, there is no accountability for the Budget. Part of the problem is that there is no transparency in terms of expenditure. Here, I have a suggestion for the next Government, whichever it is, and particularly for the present Finance Minister. If possible, we have to have, with today's technological developments, some mechanism. The

United States, for example, has just last year adopted something called Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, which had bipartisan support in the entire Senate, the entire House. Let me repeat, it is called the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act.

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

What does it do? Just as you check which films are on and which films are not, and book your ticket, each citizen can hold the Federal Government accountable. They can see which Ministry has spent how much, on any day, whatever contracts have been given, whatever has been given, whatever has not been spent, would come instantaneously to the public's notice. Why don't you introduce this? We have done the Right to Information Act. This is another thing. As part of that Act that we use a Website, we have a data base for each Ministry, each day, to update it, at the end of the day. I mean, today you are all the time updating everything else in advertisements on your Websites, what policy, what great work we have done. But why not simply give the figures in terms of transparency and accountability of what we have spent, what we had done, what contracts we have issued? I mean, it is not because you have not done the right thing, but, let everybody compete. All the citizens, all the NGOs should have access to it. So, I would suggest that, Sir, for your consideration.

Now, Sir, let me turn to two or three other issues, which is, what is the problem that we face. You see, on the plus side, let us accept that India has a great opportunity today. Our savings rates are high; our investment rates are high, our balance of payments, after long time, after 40-50 years of having problems, is today at a point where you say, 'we have surpluses, we can do what we want'. So, the balance of payments is not a problem, capital is not a problem. So, what is the problem? The problem, one, is the increasing, what you may call, disparities between what the private sector and the corporates do and what the Government can do. Today, we have a situation where we are all very proud of our billionaires. The assets of 20 billionaires are equal to 300 million Indian poor, or, according to Arjun, probably, it is equal to 70 per cent of the poor. Now, is this the country that we want with so much of assets that we have? And, how do you correct that? You cannot correct it, unless the Government functions, it is not a party failure, it is a systemic failure. We heard about State-Centre. I can tell you, Sir, from my own experience that there is no decision which any Government can make without involving 10 Central Ministries, except the Budget, which is made by the Finance Ministry, which is supposed to be secret. But, if you want to spend, if you want to do anything, you will have to go to a large number of Ministries. What is the problem with power projects? If you look at the earlier Government's record, it is no better than this Government's record, or, even the previous Government's record, or, you look back 20 years or 30 years. We have lots of projects, lots of things. But the Ministry of Power does not have the exclusive power of implementing those projects. I am not defending the Ministry. I am simply saying that it does not have the power.

3.00 P.M.

What happens? The supply of material is from the BHEL. There is Steel Ministry for steel supply. There are State Governments for transmission. There is some Ministry for land. There is some State Government for something. So, why don't we, Sir, for each vital area, hold one Ministry accountable, one Ministry responsible for implementing the projects which have been given to it?

The other problem which we have, Sir, is, again, a to-and-fro policy. Sometimes we are here; sometimes we are there, and part of the problem of 2008, Sir, if I may submit to you, is precisely this. We don't have a consistent macro economic vision of where we want to be, what we want to do, but, we are doing it. Sometimes we want appreciation. Take 2007. There was a period when we were appreciating; there was a period when we were depreciating; there was a period when we were releasing the foreign exchange; there was a period when we were buying foreign exchange. Today, you ask, what is the FDI Policy? I have been involved in all this in the Past. I am reading papers everyday now. But, if somebody asks me to say, 'is this the FDI Policy, I will say, 'I will have to check.' You can read the press note 2, press note 3; you can read press note 5, but you would not know. So, Sir, there are a large number of spokespersons on any policy. What is the SEZ Policy? One person would say this, the other person would say that, one official spokesperson would say "yes or no", one would say 'likely', what is the view of this, what is the view of that. So, Sir, this is a major challenge for whichever Government is in power, this is a challenge for us to avoid toing and froing too many spokespersons from the Government. It is not the question of RBI and Government. You know. If you go back to the record, you would see RBI saying, 'will do what is necessary', Government saying, 'the interest rates should be reduced, we are worried about inflation', this toing and froing I can give hundreds of instances saying we do something and we do not do something, we go here, go there, because we do not have a consistent framework of policy.

I know, the time is short, I should not take much of your time. This toing and froing, over-exuberance of 2007 is another big problem, 'India has arrived, India is rising, India is shining, India is great, India is incredible' despite the fact that on all indices of human development, we are not doing enough. But, 'we have arrived, we have done wonderful, wonderful'. About a hundred per cent return, I have talked about it here in this House that you cannot sustain hundred per cent rate of return. If you have to throw some sand in the wheels of policy of capital flow, you have to do it. You have to spend the money and implement the project. You cannot simply say that we are great and go to sleep. The overexuberance cannot last. It is doomed, it is going to be followed by bust.

Lastly, Sir, what can be done and what should be done? My suggestion to the present Finance Minister, whom all of us respect, including my friend, Arun Shourie who said that if he had been the Finance Minister, we would be much better off today, I would not go to that point

because, I think, we have had very good Finance Ministers. You talked about Budget expenditure, on capital expenditure being lower than what it is, some revised estimates being lower. The critical issue is implementation of the capital expenditure by Government in the next six months, I would say. The elections should not come in the picture. If necessary, you can pass whatever resolution is necessary. Empower the different Ministries at the administrative level to take decisions on projects that have been approved. Make separate Ministry responsible and if you can adopt that website where you would say that this is the capital expenditure, that my target is to double the capital expenditure in the next six months over what it was in the previous six months, and it can be done provided you hold one Ministry responsible. You give it entirely to one Ministry at the administrative level and you lay down whatever rules you want to. That is implementation and put it on the website of each Ministry like Power, Health, Education, whichever, whether it is implemented or not, on capital expenditure and not revenue expenditure. That can take its own course.

In the next six months, I would say this is the biggest priority. It is not the excise tax, not the tax reform. You can do all that later on. But let us concentrate on implementation of capital expenditure programme. I am sorry to say, it cannot be done unless we are willing to make some changes in the way we implement projects. It can be the Centre, it can be the States, it can be districts. But, philosophy is not going to help. What is going to help is that the person who is responsible for power projects, you nominate a person, give him all the powers, implement it; if he needs coal, if he does not get it from the Coal Ministry, let him import. If he needs steel, if he cannot get it from the Steel Ministry, let him import. If he needs BHEL machines, if he cannot get it, let him import. You give him full power and you create an accountability framework whereby everyday or every week, there would be a report on the website that this has been done, this project has been approved or not. But you cannot, simply by issuing what you might call *fatwa* or imploring action, you are not going to get it.

So, my suggestion to the hon. Finance Minister, before he leaves the town day after tomorrow, tomorrow you convene a Cabinet Meeting and say that for these 20 projects which are important for the country, in the next four months, the responsibility is with Mr.X of this Ministry, Mr.Y of that Ministry and so on and so forth. Do not create committees or group of Ministers. You just say that these are the projects I have approved. Please get it done. If our suppliers, implementers, providers cannot provide it, then he or she should be able to import, he or she should be able to buy it from the private sector, he or she should be able to do whatever is necessary. Why is that the power projects in private sector regime, they are all full? I need not tell you. The power projects, the refinery projects of the 20 billionaires, they are all implemented. But the billionaire of billionaires which is the Government, you have 50 per cent shortfall. Why? There is no lack of will, there is no lack of money, and there is no lack of authority. So, Sir, you are a sovereign, please use these next six months to give the country what it needs. Thank you.