

[13 May, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

5.00 P.M.

I must also thank the hon. Members who have kindly associated themselves with this issue and have expressed their very valued opinions, thank you very much.

The Resolution was, by leave, withdrawn.

(MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair)

VALEDICTORY REMARKS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, we have come to the close of this 204th Session of Rajya Sabha which commenced on Friday, the 25th February with Presidents' Address to the Members of both the Houses. As usual, this has been a long Session with interregnum from 25th March to 18th April when the Department-related Standing Committees worked hard to examine the Demands for Grants of various Ministries and Departments.

Being the Budget Session, the prime business of the House related to the Railway Budget and the General Budget of the Union. The House also had this time the opportunity to have a discussion on the Budgets of Goa and Bihar as these States are under President's Rule. Besides the Budget, the House also transacted substantial legislative and other business.

During the Session, 26 Bills were considered and passed or returned. Apart from the Money Bills, the other notable Bills passed by the House were the Patents (Amendment) Bill, 2005, the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, the University of Allahabad Bill, 2004, the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Bill, 2005, the Special Economic Zones Bill, 2005 and the most important of all, the Right to Information Bill, 2005. The passing of these Bills would provide improved policy and statutory framework for economic growth as well as better governance for the people.

Hon. Members, it has always been my sanguine hope and wish, as also my very sincere endeavour that the conduct of the business and House should purposefully address the problems of the people. I have, therefore, always actively encouraged and lent full support to discussion and debate on important issues and challenges of overcoming underdevelopment and promoting people's welfare. I am happy that in this

Session, we not only had the opportunity to have discussion on the working of eight Ministries, but also hold valuable discussion on important and wide ranging subjects such as problems faced by farmers, relief and rehabilitation to Tsunami victims, need for extension of mid-day meal scheme, problem of school drop-outs, promotion of Urdu language and reforms in the system of criminal justice. The enlightened discussion and illuminating debates of high standards of quality as well as content took place on these occasions, thus further enhancing the dignity and stature of this House of Elders.

Hon. Members, it is, however, a matter of regret that during the last so many days we missed the participation by our friends on my left. In the absence of participation by the Opposition, the conduct of business in the House lacks the flavour that comes only with active and vibrant participation by Members, belonging to all political groups and parties. All of us here have the obligation, as also the responsibility to fulfil the aspirations and expectations of the people and to promote their welfare through constructive and purposeful discussion and debate on all issues relevant to addressing the problems of the people. We, therefore, need to do serious introspection as to how we together should ensure effective functioning of the House with full and complete participation by all sections. I urge you all to address these issues with a sense of urgency, seriousness and shared concern.

Hon. Members, I hope the heat of the summer would get over soon; and with the pleasant and cool showers of mutual understanding and constructive cooperation, when we meet in the Monsoon Session of the Parliament, all of us will be working together with a sense of shared responsibility and joint commitment to strengthen our parliamentary democracy. Hon. Members, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition, leaders of various parties and groups, and all the Members for their kind co-operation. I also thank the Deputy Chairman, Members of the Panel of Vice-Chairmen and the staff of the Secretariat for their help and co-operation. Before we adjourn, may I extend to all of you my warm greetings and good wishes for the coming months?

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH); Mr. Chairman, Sir, I seek your permission to begin by expressing my very sincere thanks to you personally, and to the hon. Deputy Chairman for the grace and wisdom

with which both of you have conducted the proceedings of this House. We are all grateful to you, Sir, for the sense of fairness and fair play with which you dealt with each Member of this august House. Sir, this has been a very important Session of Parliament. Not only did we discuss the Union and Railway Budgets, but also we passed over a dozen Bills including the Patents (Amendment) Bill, the Right to Information Bill, the Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill, the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Bill, and the Special Economic Zone Bill. Nine important Bills were introduced in the House including the Manipur University Bill and the Disaster Management Bill. Sir, we also found time for Short Duration Discussions on many matters of national importance such as instances of suicide by farmers, the situation arising out of the tsunami disaster last December and the measures taken to deal with it, the reform of our criminal justice system and work of the newly-constituted North-East Council. The House also heard a wide range of important policy statements made, and I had the privilege of placing before the House a comprehensive statement on my meetings with important foreign dignitaries, particularly the Prime Minister of China and the President of Pakistan. Sir, by any standards of parliamentary work this is a commendable business. I sincerely wish I could have stopped here after recording my appreciation of the proceedings. However, Mr. Chairman, Sir, once again, we end the session with a sense of regret and concern. You have expressed your noble sentiments and I wish to associate myself fully with those sentiments. Sir, at the end of the last session, I had expressed my sadness at the manner in which the proceedings of the House could not take place. This time, Sir, once again, I stand before you with a profound sense of sadness. I believe I would not be expressing the mood of the nation if I did not express my regret at the boycott of the proceedings of the House by many Members of the Opposition. Sir, the people of India have reposed their faith and trust in us and have sent us here to project and protect their interests, to canvass and convey their concerns, to influence and shape Government policy for the benefit of our people. We are here, Sir, to voice the views of the people and not to ignore them by staying away and giving no expression to the concerns of our people. Sir, I wish to reiterate that the House is the proper forum to debate and discuss any subjects. Our Government stands willing to discuss on the floor of the House all issues and any concerns that Members of the House may have in mind and regardless of the side to which they may

belong. I, therefore, hope that the next session will be conducted with the full participation of the Opposition so that we are able to make better use of our time serving the interest of our people. There is an obligation on both the Government and the Opposition, to play their respective roles in this august House so that the system of checks and balances envisaged by our founding fathers works effectively and efficiently for the common benefit of our country. I, therefore, reiterate my appeal to the Members of the Opposition to return to Parliament so that we can resume the normal tenor of Parliamentary work, in accordance with the aspirations of the people we all represent.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, with these words, I, once again, thank you for your guidance. I also place on record our thanks to the hon. Deputy Chairman, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, even though he is absent, the Secretary General and his staff for all their good work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. Now, before we adjourn the House *sine die*, we will have the national Song.

(The National Song, "Vande Mataram", was then played) MR.

CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned *sine die*.

The House then adjourned *sine die* at twelve minutes past five of the clock.
