

(c) Following steps have been taken by the Government to face competition and to capture new markets for Indian handlooms:—

- (i) Increase of Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MSIS), rate to 7% for Handloom Product exports.
- (ii) Interest Equalization Scheme (earlier called Interest Subvention Scheme) on Pre and Post Shipment Rupee Export Credit with effect from 1st April, 2015 for five years for manufactures.
- (iii) With the support of Government of India, Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC) is organizing participation in 15-20 international fairs/trade delegations to explore new and untapped markets.
- (iv) HEPC has been organizing participation of Clusters/Apex Societies in international fairs in order to support their entry into international markets.
- (v) HEPC is also undertaking exclusive exports promotion activity for North Eastern states.
- (vi) Organizing awareness seminars on Handloom Exports and provide market trend inputs for product development for exporters situated in major production areas.

VALEDICTORY REMARKS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azadji, leaders of various parties and Members of the august House, as we come to the close of yet another Session, we are at a moment of reflection, a stock taking of what we have achieved and what we have not.

With a heavy heart, I have to say that this short but important Budget session of Rajya Sabha turned out to be another wasted opportunity. This only reinforces the 'dysfunctional pattern' that has been evident over the last few years which is a matter of serious concern and it will be a big challenge to democracy.

It is time for all sections of the House to evolve a 'collective conscience' to enable effective functioning of the House further to deep introspection to prevent any further damage to the standing of this august House which is also known as the House of Elders. Elders are usually expected to show the way to others. This was the earnest

[Mr. Chairman]

hope with which I began this Session. The optimist in me tells me even now not to lose the hope and instead wait for a turn around. I only hope that this would happen sooner than later.

Parliamentary democracy is all about ensuring governance through accountability to the people - the ultimate patrons and the ultimate masters. It is not only the accountability of the 'Executive' to be ensured by the Legislatures but the accountability of the 'Legislature' and the 'Judiciary' as well. What about the accountability of the Legislatures and their failures to discharge the mandated functions? Rajya Sabha, as the Second Chamber of the apex Legislature, too is accountable to the people. Its performance rankles me quite a bit.

This Session being the last one before the general elections fast approaching, we need to know as to what extent this august House lived up to its role and expectations of the people.

I would like to report to the people what all we have been able to do. The Legislature and the Executive have the bounden duty of doing the needful responding to the wishes and aspiration of the people as conveyed in their mandate in the general elections. All the Members of this august House would be well aware of the three critical functions of Legislatures - legislative, deliberative and accountability functions. We are supposed to make necessary legislations for the betterment of the country and the people, take up and deliberate on issues of public importance and ensure the accountability of the Government of the day. Evidence suggests that we did not rise to the expectations of the people. So, as the Chairman of the House, the custodian of Members' rights and responsibilities, I hope that everyone will realise the same and then move forward for a better performance in future.

Since June, 2014, Rajya Sabha held 18 sessions and 329 sittings till today and passed only 149 Bills. This comes to less than a Bill in two sittings. The Bills passed during this period is 39 lesser than the 188 Bills passed during 2009-14 and an astonishing 63 Bills lesser than the 251 Bills passed by this House during 2004-09. These statistics clearly show that the legislative output of this House has substantially declined since 2014.

The Question Hour is primarily meant to ensure the accountability of the Executive of the day. Calling Attention Notices and Short Duration Discussions, besides the Zero Hour and the provision for making 'Special Mentions', are meant for raising issues of public importance and concern. But we had not shown enough respect for the same.

Every Question Hour lost means an opportunity of seeking answers from the Government on eight issues of policy, implementation and governance by 40 Members. Every Zero Hour lost means depriving 15 Members from raising issues of immediate public importance.

Since June, 2014, the productivity of this august House, in terms of the time available and the time utilized for taking up Legislative Business and the issues of public concern is only 60 per cent. Who is to be held accountable for this? We all have to ponder over this. of the total 18 Sessions over the last five years, the productivity of the House has been below the five-year average of 60 per cent in respect of nine sessions.

In terms of Bills passed, it ranged from just one Bill in case of the Winter Session of 2016 and the Budget Session of 2018, two Bills passed during the Monsoon Session of 2015 to a maximum of 14 Bills, each passed during the Monsoon Sessions of 2016 and 2018.

While the sittings of the House per year during the last five years have been as per the trend of 60-70 days, the declining productivity and legislative output is a matter of deep concern. A large number of Bills are pending consideration of the House, and you all know what those Bills are. I need not enumerate them.

During the last five Sessions that I have had the honour of presiding over, a total of 28 Bills have been passed during 88 sittings which comes to less than a Bill in three sittings. While three Bills were passed during the last Winter Session, this Budget session proved to be far less productive.

This Session and the last one have witnessed heightened efforts by some sections of the House to force this august House into a kind of 'suspended animation'. This has forced me to name some Members, not to my liking, but at the same time, I was mandated to do my responsibility, as I was worried about the public perception about the state of affairs in the House. Further logical action could not be taken as some senior leaders assured me that they would talk it out with the concerned parties and Members and convince them not to disrupt the House any further. But it did not happen, unfortunately.

I have made my best possible efforts to enable normal functioning of the House. I have been regularly talking to the leaders of various parties but my anguish seems to have no impact. This only exposed the limitations of the Chair in altering the scripts of some sections of the House. So, this is really very unfortunate.

[Mr. Chairman]

As the hon. Members are aware, I have set up a two-member committee to examine the existing provisions of the Rules of Business of the House in terms of their adequacy to enable smooth functioning of the House. This report has been received and the same will soon be referred to the General Purposes Committee of the House. I would like the Committee to take a final view on the recommendations so that they could be made effective before the next full Session of the House. Hon. Members, ultimately, this august House would be what you want it to be, a performing one or a dysfunctional one. The choice is of the Members. People of the country want it to be a performing one. So, we should all keep in mind the expectations of the people and try to live up to their expectations.

During this Budget Session with 10 sittings, as against the available total time of 48 hours, more than 44 hours have been lost due to disruptions. Productivity of the House during this Session has been 4.9 per cent.

Hon. Members, the looming prospect of this Session ending up as one without passing any Bill has been thankfully averted by late realization and some understanding today. As a result, five Bills have been passed today including three Financial Bills. But I suggest that the practice of passing Bills without discussion is better avoided. I agree with the Members also. Six bills have also been introduced during this Session. Only 16 Zero Hour Submissions could be taken up during this Session with no Special Mentions at all. But we all agree that it was not enough.

I hope the 'Report to the People' on the functioning of the House during the last five years will be taken serious note of by the Hon. Members. As Chairman of Rajya Sabha, I have the responsibility to convey to the country and its people about the performance of the House.

Members of this august House are elected by those elected by the people. You are supposed to demonstrate higher sense of responsibility and ensure normal functioning of the House guided by the people's concerns and their expectations.

So, each one of us must seriously think if we can collectively enhance the quality of debates, discussions and most importantly, the demeanor. If you can follow the procedures and use the available parliamentary tools, the hopes and aspirations of the people, you are expected to articulate, will be heard. If cacophony and disruptive spectacles become our House's defining characteristic, we would have betrayed people's trust in each one of us. I do hope we don't allow further downslide in the coming days.

Hon. Members, despite all the shortcomings during the last five years, Rajya Sabha passed a few path-breaking Bills positively impacting the socio-economic development of the country besides checking corruption and improving transparency. These include:

1. The Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill, 2019 providing 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections;
2. The Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill, 2014 for introduction of GST and nine other related Bills;
3. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bills, 2015 and 2018;
4. The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to prevent sexual abuse of children;
5. The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018;
6. The Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018;
7. The Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Bill, 2015;
8. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 and the related Amendment Bill, 2017;
9. The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 for setting up a National Commission for Backward Classes;
10. The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2016 to protect the interest of buyers and enhance the confidence in and credibility of the important real estate sector;
11. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2015 and 2016 besides The Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill, 2015 for auctioning of mines;
12. The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016;
13. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2016;
14. The Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Bill, 2015; and
15. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2016.

[Mr. Chairman]

Hon. Members, we should all take care of the perception that is going and we must see to it that in the coming days, we improve our performance. I can only say obstruction of proceedings cannot be allowed to emerge as the preferred form of Parliamentary democracy. Our nation has just entered the 70th year of Republic. Legislatures and their hon. Members should discharge their noble responsibilities. As the House of Elders, we need to lead by example. This is a privilege that the people bestow on a few. The expectations are high. Our responsibilities are onerous. We can ill-afford to regret over lost opportunities we have had.

Next time when we meet, we must script a new chapter, a chapter we can all be proud of in the coming days.

Hon. Members, I have small good news also. Rajya Sabha TV is the property of this august House. I am happy to inform that RSTV, on the 4th of this month crossed 2 million mark in terms of YouTube subscribers and has emerged as one of the leading channels which has grown five times since then.

This reflects the interest of the people in the proceedings of the House and related content. Hon. Members may keep this in mind. Though it was not a very productive Session, I would like to thank all the Members, at least, for today, the concluding day. The Session ended on a positive note and a good thing has happened.

Hon. Members, I have enumerated all this as part of my responsibility as the Chairman of this institution, the House of Elders, to convey to the people, what has happened, what has not happened, what is expected and what we should do in the future, and, that is the purpose of this valedictory address by the Chair, which always happens.

Now, before we adjourn *sine die*, let us rise for the National Song.

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 forty-six minutes
past twelve of the clock.*
