

OBSERVATIONS BY THE CHAIR

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, Leader of the House and also Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Chairman and respected Ministers, leaders of various parties and groups in the House, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you as the important second part of the Budget Session of Parliament begins today. Besides considering the Budget for 2020-21 for our country of about 130-crore population, this part of the Session, with 22 sittings, offers all of you several opportunities to raise important issues of larger public concern and discuss some major legislative proposals of the Government.

The first part of the Budget Session has largely been purposeful with 96 per cent productivity besides quality discussions on the Motion of Thanks to the President and the General Budget for 2020-21. I hope that this part of the Session would prove to be even more meaningful.

We are meeting after a three-week recess meant for 24 Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committees to consider Demands for Grants of all the Ministries as proposed in the Budget presented to the Parliament during the first part of this Session that concluded on the 11th of last month. I am sure, various Committees would have gone about this task with all the seriousness that was required and would present informed reports to the Parliament for further consideration by the Government.

Of the 24 Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committees, 8 are with us, our House, and the remaining 16 with Lok Sabha. On the resumption of the Budget Session today, I thought it would be appropriate to give you an account of the functioning of 8 Committees of Rajya Sabha. I thought it necessary to present in the process, the functioning of the Parliament in proper perspective to the people through you and the media. It is because the general impression is that the sittings of the Parliament are steadily declining over the years and it is around 60 to 70 sittings per year now as against 100 or more than that earlier in the 50s. There is some essence in that. But, at the same time, let me put it in proper perspective to the people.

I would like to highlight that since the introduction of Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committees in 1993, substantial work of Parliament is being transacted by these Committees in which almost all parties and groups are represented. These Committees function in a non-partisan manner and mostly submit unanimous

reports on various important issues for further consideration of the Parliament and the Government as the case may be.

Hon. Members, I would now like to give a brief account of the functioning of various Committees during the recess.

In respect of the Demands for Grants for 2020-21, the 8 Committees of Rajya Sabha have held 20 meetings and discussed the demands of 18 Ministries over a Total duration of 63 hours. Taking into consideration that Parliament meets for about 6 hours during each sitting, the Total time spent by these 8 Committees examining the demands of various Ministries in effect amounts to over 10 sittings of the Parliament. Proportionately, the work done by the 16 Committees of Lok Sabha amounts to another 20 sittings of the Parliament. In all, the work put in by the Total 24 DRSCs in examining the Demands for Grants of all the Ministries equals to 30 days of functioning of the Parliament, which is quite significant. That alone takes the Total sittings of the Parliament during a year to over 100 days. If we consider the Total range of functions of these Committees, this would be even much more. So, I would like to assure the people and all other stakeholders, including the media, that the Parliament is meeting for sufficient time every year — there is always a scope for further improvement — in the discharge of its functions.

These 8 Committees of Rajya Sabha have 244 Members from both the Houses of Parliament, including 78 Members from Rajya Sabha and 166 Members from Lok Sabha. These Committees have had two to three sittings each. Overall, the attendance of Members in the 20 meetings has been 45.35 per cent. I am not happy on that count. Four of these eight Committees have reported attendance of more than 50 per cent, which is a positive sign. The highest attendance of 65.51 per cent has been in the meetings of the Committee on Health and Family Welfare.

DR. K. KESHAHA RAO: Sir, we congratulate the Chairman for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Chairman and Members also.

I am also happy to inform that 19 of the 29 Members of this Committee attended each of the three meetings of the Committee. Lowest attendance of 32.25 per cent has been in respect of the Committee on Commerce. I am happy to inform that the attendance of the Members of Rajya Sabha at 52.57 per cent continues to be higher than that of

Lok Sabha at 46.37 per cent. While the overall attendance of Members of the BJP and the Congress, accounting for a Total of 142 Members, has been much higher than 50 per cent, the attendance of Members from other parties, accounting for 102 Members, has been only about 40 per cent. On the whole, the Members seem to have taken more interest in issues concerning Health, Human Resource Development, Home Affairs and Transport & Tourism while somewhat lesser interest in Commerce, Industry and Science and Technology.

Hon. Members, you may recall that I have reviewed the functioning of various committees of Rajya Sabha with the Chairmen of all the Committees on the 5th of December last year and brought my concerns to the notice of this august House as well on the same day. The last review covered 41 meetings held by the eight Committees of Rajya Sabha since their reconstitution in September last year. This is being done in order to give you all a brief comparative account of the last and the present reviews. In a positive development, of the Total 36 Members from both the Houses who reported full attendance last time, a Total of 87 Members, accounting for 36 per cent of the Total 244 Members have reported full attendance in the meetings on Demands for Grants. My compliments to those Members who were in cent per cent attendance in the Committees.

The number of Members of Rajya Sabha with full attendance has increased from 18 last time to 28 now. In the case of Lok Sabha Members, the increase in this regard has been from 18 last time to 59 now. However, 95 Members, accounting for 39 per cent of the Total 244, did not attend any meeting on the Demands for Grants. Only 28 Members had zero attendance last time. Twenty-three of the 78 Rajya Sabha Members, that is, 29 per cent, did not attend any meeting this time as against only 11 such Members in the last review. Seventy-eight of the 166 Lok Sabha Members, that is, 47 per cent of the Total, did not attend any meeting as against 72 in the last review. The Total number of Members who skipped two or more successive meetings has increased from 100 last year to 106 now. These include 28 Members from Rajya Sabha as in the case of last review and 78 Members from Lok Sabha, with an increase of six from the last time. You may recall that in December last year I referred to 18 Members of this august House, including Chairmen of seven DRSCs, who have attended all meetings of the respective Committees. Besides these Chairmen, six of them have again attended all the meetings of respective Committees on Demands for Grants. I would like to refer

to those six Members as a token of appreciation for continuing with full attendance. These are Shri Rakesh Sinha, Dr. L. Hanumanthaiah, Shri Ravi Prakash Verma, Shri Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Shri P. Wilson and Dr. Sasmit Patra.

In view of the facts cited earlier, I would like to reiterate my appeal to leaders of all parties, floor leaders and Members to ensure better attendance in the meetings of Parliamentary Committees so that they do justice to the mandate with which they have been conceived. This warrants qualitative and quantitative improvement.

I wish that the Secretariat makes available to all the Members details of each Party and each Member. I have no problem in passing on that information to the Media. The purpose is to reach the people because getting elected to the House and not attending even one meeting is really unfortunate. This has to be taken seriously by all the Parties concerned.

I join you all in looking forward to a meaningful and productive second part of the Budget Session. I have started this to bring in more accountability and transparency in the system so that we can improve our functioning. Thank you all. Now Papers to be laid on the Table.

PAPERS LAID ON TABLE

Notification of the Ministry of Mines

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS; THE MINISTER OF COAL; AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI): Sir, I lay on the Table, under sub-section (1) of Section 28 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, a copy (in English and Hindi) of the Ministry of Mines, Notification No. G.S.R. 864 (E), dated the 20th November, 2019, notifying certain entities for the purposes of the second proviso to sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the said Act.

[Placed in Library. *See* No. L.T. 2147/17/20]

Reports and Accounts (2016-17) of NYKS, New Delhi and related papers

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS; AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI KIREN RIJU): Sir, I lay on the Table, a copy each (in English and Hindi) of the following papers:—