

REFERENCE BY THE CHAIR**Reference to the unprecedented bushfires in Australia**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, as you might be aware, Australia is facing unprecedented bushfires since September, 2019, which have destroyed about 10.3 million hectares of land across the country, more than 2,500 homes, livelihoods and numerous other properties. Twenty-nine persons including four firefighters have reportedly lost their lives and millions of animals have perished in these bushfires. The ecosystem has been widely affected with various species of indigenous flora and fauna devastated by the fires.

The loss of precious lives and property in the Australian bushfires is indeed painful and unfortunate.

This House joins me in expressing our heartfelt condolences as well as deep sympathy and sorrow on the losses suffered by the friendly people of Australia and reiterate India's stand of solidarity with them in their hour of grief.

I request Members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of those who lost their lives in this tragic incident.

(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute)

FELICITATIONS BY THE CHAIR**Felicitations to sitting and former Members on being conferred with Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan awards**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, as you are aware, Shrimati M. C. Mary Kom, a Nominated Member of this august House, has been conferred the Padma Vibhushan for the year 2020 for her exceptional and distinguished service in the field of Sports.

Besides her, late Shri George Fernandes, late Shri Arun Jaitley and late Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, former Members of this House, have also been conferred the Padma Vibhushan for the year 2020 for their exceptional and distinguished service in the field of Public Affairs. Also, Shri S. C. Jamir and late Shri Manohar Parrikar, former Members of this House, have been conferred the Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of a high order in the field of Public Affairs.

With this recognition, Shrimati Mary Kom, a 2012 London Olympics medalist and six-time World Boxing Champion, has become the first woman sportsperson of the country to be decorated with the Padma Vibhushan. Her illustrious career studded with exemplary achievements speaks volumes of her willpower, passion, hard work, perseverance, unwavering dedication and commitment to continuously improve upon her performances and scale new heights in the field of Boxing. The fine balance which she has struck among her multifarious roles as a sportsperson, a legislator, a mother and a homemaker is a shining example worth emulation for all of us, particularly, the women of the country.

I wish Shrimati M. C. Mary Kom success in her future endeavours and hope that she continues to bring many more laurels to the country.

Late Shri George Fernandes, in a political career spanning more than four decades, served in the Union Council of Ministers holding key portfolios like Communications, Industry, Railways and Defence and was an able administrator. A veteran trade unionist, he participated in several human rights and civil liberties movements and was associated with a number of global campaigns on nuclear disarmament and environmental issues. He served as a Member of this august House from August, 2009 to July, 2010.

Late Shri Arun Jaitley, a legal luminary, an outstanding parliamentarian, an eloquent orator and an astute politician, served in the Union Council of Ministers holding key portfolios like Information and Broadcasting, Disinvestment, Law, Justice and Company Affairs, Commerce and Industry, Shipping, Defence, Finance and Corporate Affairs. As the Minister of Finance, he was instrumental in piloting several important legislations, including the GST Act, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, the Benami Transactions Act, etc., which projected India as a modern economy. Shri Jaitley served as a Member of this House for four consecutive terms from 2000 to 2019. He also served as the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha from 2009 to 2014 and as the Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha from 2014 to 2019.

Late Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, a leader who voiced the concern of the masses, an effective orator, an epitome of grace, grit, affection and amiability, served in various capacities during her entire political career. She was the first woman to be the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, the first Woman Outstanding

[Mr. Chairman]

Parliamentarian and the first woman Chief Minister of Delhi. As a Union Minister, she held the important portfolios of External Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Parliamentary Affairs and Information and Broadcasting. She served as a Member of this House for three terms between 1990 and 2009.

Shri S. C. Jamir, a noted tribal leader, who is considered as one of the architects of modern Nagaland, played an instrumental role in the creation of the State of Nagaland. He served as the Chief Minister of Nagaland for four terms; as a Member of this House from July, 1987 to February, 1989; as a Minister in the Union Council of Ministers and as the Governor of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Odisha.

Late Shri Manohar Parrikar, a very capable administrator and a distinguished parliamentarian, served as the Chief Minister of Goa thrice and as the Minister of Defence in the Government of India. He also served as a Member of this House from November, 2014 to September, 2017.

It is indeed a matter of great pride for this House that a sitting Nominated Member and five of our former Members have been conferred the prestigious civilian awards of the country.

On behalf of the whole House and on my own behalf, I place on record our appreciation for the exceptional services rendered by Shrimati M. C. Mary Kom, late Shri George Fernandes, late Shri Arun Jaitley, late Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, Shri S. C. Jamir and late Shri Manohar Parrikar in their respective fields.

I also congratulate all the other Padma Awardees for the year 2020 for their outstanding accomplishments in their respective fields.

REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ISSUE OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND ITS EFFECT ON SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I lay on the Table a copy of the Report (in English and Hindi) of the **Ad Hoc* Committee constituted to study the "alarming issue of child pornography and its effect on society as a whole".

* The constitution of the 14 Member *Ad Hoc* Committee headed by Shri Jairam Ramesh was announced by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha on 12th December, 2019 with instructions to report within one month. The Committee ceased to exist after presenting its report to the Chairman, Rajya Sabha on the 25th January, 2020.