

The House then adjourned at thirty-one minutes past twelve of the clock.

The House re-assembled at forty-one minutes past twelve of the clock.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE) in the Chair.]

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI PARASANTA CHATTERJEE): The House is adjourned for another ten minutes.

The House then adjourned at forty-three minutes
past twelve of the clock.

The House reassembled at fifty-three minutes past twelve of the clock,
(MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Leader of the Opposition wishes to speak.

**Right of Chief Ministers to Voice their views and opinions
with Prime Minister**

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have experienced a little obstruction in the normal functioning of the House. I will not go into other issues like Member 'A' getting time and Member 'B' not getting time. But that is the reality too. However, Sir, here in this case, there was a grievance expressed by certain Members on account of the difficulty that the Prime Minister had in meeting the Chief Ministers of five States. The central question here is of the respect that is accorded to the principle of federalism and the Chief Ministers of States. I do know, Sir, that a Group of Ministers was constituted. A very senior Member of the Cabinet the Union Home Minister has chaired it. Perhaps a report has already been considered by the Cabinet or is going to be considered. The hon. Members are of the view, Sir, and they have said that the Chief Ministers wanted to call on the Prime Minister after the Group of Ministers had concluded their job. On that occasion also, the Prime Minister had had difficulty in meeting the Chief Ministers, that is from where this grievance is borne.

Also, Sir, if various other policies can be put on the website and the opinion of the larger public can be obtained or solicited a policy like minerals — whether major or minor mineral — also merits such equal treatment. If that too is put on the website, then where would be the difficulty? And I do believe, Sir, that the Chief Ministers have a right to voice the grievances or opinions or the views of the State as they have the honour to be heads of Governments. That is the point. If the Government would respond to it, we would be very grateful. We have no intention of interrupting the functioning.

We do wish to hear the hon. External Affairs Minister, and I am encouraged by the fact that the hon. the Prime Minister is here. He perhaps comes here with the intent of clarifying some of the issues that are being raised as direct questions to him. He would benefit by hearing all this. Perhaps, the Chairman of the Group of Ministers will respond and clarify the situation.

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL): Sir, we all know that the

Prime Minister and other Ministers in the present Government are very happy to meet not only the Chief Ministers of the States, but the Ministers and the MLAs also, and we will continue to do that. In this case, the policy was submitted to the Cabinet, and the Cabinet had constituted a Group of Ministers. That consisted of some Ministers over there, and the Group of Ministers heard the officers, heard the organisations and the private industry people; Group of Ministers received the statements given by the States, and later on, when the hon. Chief Ministers wanted to meet in order to discuss this policy, it was naturally

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suggested to them that it would be better if the matter which is before the Cabinet and before the Group of Ministers is discussed by them with the Group of Ministers, and we were very happy to welcome them, and they met the Group of Ministers. They met the Group of Ministers not only for 10 minutes or 15 minutes, but for nearly for two hours, the discussion did take place, and each of the Chief Ministers was given the time to explain his point of view, and they did explain their points of view, and they were also asked that if they had anything more than that to submit, they can send those things in writing also. The matter was before the public as such, and this was considered by the outsiders also. Now, Sir, this matter is going to go back to the Cabinet and the Cabinet is going to discuss, and later on, I think, such a big policy matter will definitely be brought to the notice of the Members of the House and that would be the occasion, and if there are certain other things, that can be discussed. We would be only happy to receive the Chief Ministers and Ministers, and anybody who wants to say anything with respect to this policy, and we all know that the hon. Prime Minister has always been very, very considerate and kind to meet anybody wanting to meet. There is no question of not meeting the Chief Ministers, not meeting the Ministers or any important person in the country whenever there is an occasion. But this is the fact which I wanted to put before the House, and I hope that in response to what I have explained, probably, the House would be allowed to take up the matter for which we are all waiting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We resume our scheduled agenda. Reply to the discussion on the Indo-US Nuclear Deal raised by Shri Sitaram Yechury on 4th December, 2007. When the House adjourned on the 4th December, 2007, the Deputy Chairman announced that the discussion had concluded, and the Minister will reply. The Minister of External Affairs may, accordingly, be called upon to make his reply.

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

Indo-US Nuclear Deal

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to all the hon. Members who have participated in this debate. We started our discussions at 2.00 p.m. and we concluded our discussions without any lunch break at 11.30 p.m. There was no dinner break also. There was neither lunch break nor dinner break and it went up to 11.30 p.m. I had the privilege of listening to some of the very educative and interesting observations, some lengthy, some short. All the hon. Members who participated in the discussions made their contributions and I am grateful to them for exploring the issues from different angles. Before I respond to most of the issues raised by the hon. Members, they have been responded to by a number of my colleagues. I would like to express my regret that I could not listen to the first part of the speech, not exactly the first part, the first few minutes of the speech, of Mr. Arun Shourie