

RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 25th November, 2024/4 Agrahayana, 1946 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,

MR. CHAIRMAN *in the Chair.*

(The National Anthem, “Jana Gana Mana”, was played.)

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I am pleased to extend greetings to the hon. Member of Parliament, **Dr. Dharmasthala Veerendra Heggade**, on his birthday today.

A Member of this august House since July 2022, Dr. Heggade has been recipient of Padma Vibhushan in 2015 and Padma Bhushan in 2000. He was also honoured with Karnataka Rathna in 2009 and Rajyotsav award in 1985 by the Government of Karnataka. Dr. Heggade has been serving as the Chief Administrator of Shri Kshetra Dharmasthala Manjunath Swamy temple from the age of 19. He has been instrumental in transforming the small village of Dharmasthala into the most visited temple-city in Southern Karnataka. His contributions also extend to education, rural development and promotion of yoga and ayurveda. He is a true example of a karma yogi and I am sure society at large would be immensely benefited by his presence in the House.

He is married to Shrimati Hemavathi V. Heggade and the couple is blessed with a daughter - Shrimati Shraddha.

Hon. Members, on my own and your behalf, I wish him a long, healthy and happy life.

OBITUARY REFERENCES

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of former Members of this august House - Shrimati Gurcharan Kaur, Shri K. Natwar Singh, Shri Sitaram Yechury, Shri Dharam Pal Sabharwal, Shri Dhaneswar Majhi, Dr. Gyan Prakash Pilonia and Shri Pravat Kumar Samantaray.

Shrimati Gurcharan Kaur passed away on 4th July 2024. She served as a Member of this House representing the State of Punjab from 2001 to 2004. Born on 4th

February 1936 at Jaitu in Faridkot District of Punjab, Shrimati Gurcharan Kaur began her journey as a teacher, shaping young minds with her wisdom and guidance. Over the years, she emerged as an ardent advocate for women's rights and empowerment, championing the cause of gender equality with unwavering commitment.

In the passing away of Shrimati Gurcharan Kaur, the country has lost a champion of women's rights and an able parliamentarian.

Shri K. Natwar Singh passed away on 11th August 2024. He was a Member of this House from 2002 to 2008.

Born on 16th May, 1931, in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, Shri Natwar Singh had a distinguished career spanning over five decades in public life. A Cambridge graduate and Indian Foreign Service Officer of 1953 Batch, Shri Natwar Singh served as a Member of the Eighth and Twelfth Lok Sabha. He was Minister of State holding portfolios of Steel, Mines, Coal, Agriculture and External Affairs from 1985 to 1989, and as Minister of External Affairs, from 2004 to 2005..

As a career diplomat of repute, he served under Prime Ministership of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, Shri Morarji Desai, Smt. Indira Gandhi and later, in public life, under Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao and Dr. Manmohan Singh. His stints in London, Islamabad, Warsaw, New York and Lusaka, Zambia, in particular, have been truly worthy of admiration. His contributions in the successful organization of the historic Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Delhi remain unmatched to this day. For his unmatched contribution, he was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1984. Shri Natwar Singh embodied the zeal to live and contribute. He was a prolific writer and chronicler of repute. His life and legacy continue to inspire many in public life.

I vividly recollect hosting him, on his birthday, in May 2023, and the lunch with him at his residence on his birthday this year - the last one we had. Both these occasions are deeply etched in my memory.

In the passing away of Shri Natwar Singh, the country has lost a distinguished diplomat, a prolific author and an outstanding parliamentarian whose contributions will be remembered for years to come.

Shri Sitaram Yechury passed away on 12th September, 2024. He served as a Member of this House, representing the State of West Bengal, for two consecutive terms from 2005 to 2017.

Born on August 12, 1952, in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, Shri Yechuri started his political career as a student leader and dedicated his life to the pursuit of social justice, workers' rights and progressive policies. His unwavering commitment to these ideals resonated deeply with his work, both within and outside the walls of this

hallowed Chamber. His ability to forge consensus on varied issues and his willingness to engage in constructive dialogue made him a beloved and respected figure in our parliamentary democracy. Members of this august House, irrespective of their party affiliations, held Shri Yechury in great respect and affection and looked up to him for guidance. Shri Yechury was elected as General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the year 2015, a position he held till his demise.

In the passing away of Shri Yechury, the country has lost an influential leader, a committed socialist and a distinguished parliamentarian whose contributions will be remembered for years to come.

Shri Dharam Pal Sabharwal passed away on the 21st of September, 2024. He served as a Member of this august House, representing the State of Punjab from April 2004 to April 2010. Born on the 10th of January, 1941 in Jalandhar, Punjab, Shri Sabharwal dedicated his life to the service of the nation and the upliftment of weaker sections. Shri Sabharwal began his public journey at the grassroots level and went on to make significant contributions to public life. He served as a Municipal Councillor in 1972, a Member of Punjab Legislative Assembly on two occasions, 1977 and 1992, and held several ministerial portfolios in the Government of Punjab. In the passing away of Shri Dharam Pal Sabharwal, the country has lost a compassionate leader, a seasoned administrator and an able parliamentarian.

Shri Dhaneshwar Majhi passed away on the 9th of October, 2024. He served as a Member of this House, representing the State of Odisha from April 1978 to April 1984. He also served as a Member of the Odisha Legislative Assembly for five terms between the years 1971 and 2019. Born on 5th July, 1941 at Babejor village in Kalahandi district of Odisha, Shri Majhi worked tirelessly for the upliftment of deprived sections of the society. His contributions have played a significant role in social, economic and political upliftment of the marginalized sections of Odisha. In the passing away of Shri Dhaneshwar Majhi, the country has lost a veteran tribal leader, a dedicated social worker and an experienced legislator.

Dr. Gyan Prakash Pilania passed away on the 13th of October, 2024. He served as a Member of this august House for two consecutive terms from 2004 to 2014, representing the State of Rajasthan. Born on 18th February, 1932 in village Amarpura in Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan, Dr. Gyan Prakash Pilania joined Indian Police Service in the year 1955 and served as the Director General of Police of the State of Rajasthan from 1988 to 1989. Dr. Pilania also served as a Member of the Public Service Commission of Rajasthan. An ardent advocate of social justice, Dr. Pilania played a pivotal role in socio-economic empowerment of marginalized sections in Rajasthan. As a parliamentarian, his priority was on water resources,

renewable energy and agricultural sustainability, leaving a lasting impact on Rajasthan's development. In the passing away of Dr. Gyan Prakash Pilania, the country has lost a capable administrator, a dedicated social worker and an able parliamentarian.

Shri Pravat Kumar Samantaray, a former Member of this House, passed away on the 17th of October, 2024. He served as a Member of this House representing the State of Odisha from April 1992 to April 1996. Born on 22nd April, 1950 at Shasanipara village in Kendrapara district of Odisha, Shri Samantaray's commitment to public service started from his student days. He worked tirelessly to improve the living conditions of workers and their socio-political empowerment. His exemplary contributions as the President of the Indian National Port and Dock Workers Federation are remembered even to this day. Shri Samantaray also served as a Member of 12th and 13th Lok Sabha from 1998 to 2004, representing Kendrapara, Odisha. His numerous initiatives for the development of the district and the State made him a beloved figure among the common people. In the passing away of Shri Pravat Kumar Samantaray, the country has lost a veteran trade unionist, a committed social worker and a distinguished legislator.

Hon. Members, we deeply mourn the passing away of Shrimati Gurcharan Kaur, Shri K. Natwar Singh, Shri Sitaram Yechury, Shri Dharam Pal Sabharwal, Shri Dhaneshwar Majhi, Dr. Gyan Prakash Pilania and Shri Pravat Kumar Samantaray. I request Members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.

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

Secretary-General will convey to the members of the bereaved families our sense of profound sorrow and deep sympathy.

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, today marks the opening of the 266th Session of Rajya Sabha — a Session that coincides with the historic 75th Anniversary of adoption of our Constitution.

This Session comprises 19 sittings, including four days allocated for Private Members' Business. The newly reconstituted Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees have resumed their work and vital functions. Your active