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1 Sravana, 1946 (Saka)

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
RAJYA SABHA
OFFICIAL REPORT (FLOOR VERSION)

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RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 23^d July, 2024 /1 Sravana, 1946 (Saka)

*The House met at thirty minutes past one of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.*

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I am pleased to extend birthday greetings to hon. Member of Parliament, Shri Subrata Bakshi. Shri Bakshi is a Member of this august House since April, 2020. He is the West Bengal State unit President of AITC and also Deputy Leader of the Party in Rajya Sabha. He brings with him a wealth of experience - a Cabinet Minister in West Bengal Government (Minister of Public Works and Transport), Member of Lok Sabha from 2011-2014 and 2014-2019 and a Member of West Bengal Legislative Assembly from 2001-2011. He exemplifies amiability, decorous demeanour and his participation has been highly impactful and enriching. He is married to Shrimati Sahana Bakshi and the couple is blessed with a son-Saptarshi.

Hon. Members, on behalf of this House, I wish him a long, healthy and happy life and extend greetings to the family members.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, yesterday I had indicated that I will give my ruling on the issue of electronic filing of notices.

(i) Hon. Members, India's digital stride has globally been acknowledged. The World Bank chief, Shri Ajay Banga, reflected thus: "I cannot praise enough what India is doing to open up space for entrepreneurs. That is visible in the digital space. India put in place public digital infrastructure that is so well attuned for private initiatives to blend in to take advantage of this infrastructure".

World Bank in its G20 document has reflected that India has achieved financial inclusion targets in just six years which would otherwise have taken at least 47 long years owing to its Digital Payment Infrastructure (DPI) such as Jan Dhan Bank accounts, Aadhaar and Mobile Phones (the JAM trinity).

Adaptability and acceptability of digitisation is reflected in India accounting for more than half of the global transactions. Even millions of farmers receive three times

a year direct transfers to their accounts. Such service delivery is increasingly getting into this digital mode.

In this situation, hon. Members, it would not be sending right signals that we, from the Parliament, do not lead by example.

After deep thought and taking into consideration the concerns raised by Members, a suitable mechanism for facilitating the hon. Members in the matter has been put in place and an IT Helpdesk has been set up in the Lobby for resolution for their queries in this regard and also for contingent situations. I would welcome any suggestion of hon. Members to enable them to go digital.

In this premise, I am sure, hon. Members will appreciate and support this gesture. We have to be forward-looking rather than be retrograde and this would inspire and motivate people at large to go digital.

(ii) Hon. Members, Shri Digvijaya Singh, while addressing the House, on 22nd July, indicated and I quote: "Sir, I have a point of order under Rule 238." And, he, in particular, made reference to the explanation thereof, relevant extract as under:

"238. Rules to be observed while speaking

A member while speaking shall not —

- (v) reflect upon the conduct of a person or persons in high authority unless the discussion is based on a substantive motion drawn in proper terms.

Explanation:- The words "persons in high authority means persons whose conduct can only be discussed on a substantive motion drawn in proper terms under the Constitution or such other persons whose conduct, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be discussed on a substantive motion drawn in terms to be approved by him", that is, Chairman.

The occasion for Shri Digvijaya Singh to raise the point of order was at my taking serious notice of the conduct of Shri Jairam Ramesh, who sitting in his chair and without permission of the Chair, in high decibel, made highly derogatory objectionable observations against high constitutional authority, that were instantly expunged. I had indicated thus and I quote what I said:

"...I take it not only as nuisance but also as disturbance...Don't create it like a street. Mr. Jairam Ramesh, you cannot create like this. ...I take a very strong objection....The hon. Member, firstly, is speaking while sitting in his chair; then, the

hon. Member is speaking without getting my permission and the hon. Member is using disparaging words, objectionable! ...I appeal to the senior leadership that let us rise to the occasion and see that the dignity of this House is not so shattered..."

The contextual situation, as indicated, leaves no doubt that the point of order has been raised in a wholly inconceivable manner and, as a matter of fact, takes exception to the disregard of mandate of Rule 238 by Shri Jairam Ramesh. In this situation, the point of order raised by Shri Digvijaya Singh, under Rule 238(v), is without merit and declined.

Hon. Members, I take the opportunity to urge all of you in this august House to follow protocol and adhere to the rules. It is highly inappropriate for a Member to address the House without leave of the Chair. In this case, the conduct of the hon. Member is aggravating as he, in high decibel, without leave of the Chair, sitting in his seat, imparted unbecoming and disparaging remarks against high constitutional authority, causing disturbance and disruptions in the House. Such conduct by one with parliamentary experience and ministerial background is unfortunate and reprehensible. Given the frequency of such incidents, I urge the hon. Member to reflect and adhere to rule-based conduct.

I also seek to draw attention of hon. Members that late Shri S.B. Chavan, as the first Chairman of the Ethics Committee, in 1998, in the First Report of the Ethics Committee, had imparted directions to the Members including, *inter alia*, that Members must not do anything that brings disrepute to the Parliament and affects their credibility. I would urge the hon. Members to go through the Report carefully and ensure that they uphold the standards it sets forth.

The Report, for the benefit of hon. Members, has already been uploaded today on Member's Portal. We need to exemplify, hon. Members, our conduct that is worth emulation. And, I would urge the hon. Members that this is a very, very serious aspect. I find that there has been some murmur. I have carefully thought about it and unless we rise to the occasion, we will be sending a wrong signal.

REGARDING RULE 238 AND OTHER MATTERS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Tiruchi Siva, do you want to say something?

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I recall that earlier, in the House, an issue was raised about a Member of the other House. And, we had objected saying, the Members of the other House cannot have an opportunity to

explain themselves; so, the matter cannot be raised. At that time, you had given a ruling that anything under the sky can be debated and discussed here. Then, I had asked whether Rule 238 had become redundant. You had said that you would be giving a ruling later on. Rule 238 mentions all these things -- a matter which is *sub judice* or a person who is not able to defend himself in the House — cannot be raised.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just one minute. This is not the issue at the moment. Mr. Tiruchi Siva, you are a senior Member. Our Rules of Procedure specifically provide that the conduct of a Member of Lok Sabha can be discussed in this House. Rules provide this. It says that if an allegation is to be levelled against an hon. Member of the Lok Sabha, then, permission of the Chair has to be taken. Therefore, when I gave my ruling, -- I will have it sent to you also -- I had covered all these aspects. We, in this House, have to be rigorously bound by the rules and protocol. If we say that we can raise anything in this House, that is subject to the Rules of Procedure. It cannot be that we can raise all the matters we want, in any manner we like. I find quite often that a Member is normally not satisfied with the answer of the hon. Minister. There is a mechanism. We should take recourse to that mechanism. It is an elaborate procedure and there will be wholesome outcome. Now, the Leader of the Opposition. Sir, we had an occasion to greet you on your birthday.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE): Thank you, Sir. But, that was a very short introduction I found in that. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, Sir, it was very long. ...*(Interruptions)*... I reflected your career; your son, as a Minister; your son-in-law, as a Member of Lok Sabha. ...*(Interruptions)*... I will have it sent to you, Sir. ...*(Interruptions)*... I will have it sent to you today. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE: Sir, I am thankful to you that, at least, you remembered me. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sir, I remembered you on two occasions — one, on your birthday when I called you and you blessed me; second, yesterday in the House, as per practice.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE: Thank you very much for that.

सर, आपने यह कहा कि इस हाउस में हमको रूल्स के तहत चलना है और रूल्स छोड़ कर कोई भी कितना बड़ा नेता हो, उसको उससे हट कर बात करना ठीक नहीं है। आपने हमको बार-बार यह भी याद दिलाया कि सदन में जो लीडर ऑफ द हाउस हैं, उनकी जितनी मर्यादा होती है, उतनी ही मर्यादा लीडर ऑफ दि अपोज़िशन की होती है। यह आपने बार-बार कहा। हमने भी उसको यही समझा कि लीडर ऑफ द हाउस को जो मौका मिलता है, वे हाथ उठाते हैं, तो आप सबको बिठा कर उनकी बात सुनवाते हैं, लेकिन जब हम उठते हैं, तो कभी-कभी बहुत कोशिश करनी पड़ती है। आज तो हमें चांस मिला, लेकिन बाकी वक्त बहुत कोशिश, जद्दोजहद, लड़ना और इतना होता है कि रूल्स छोड़ कर मेरा आकर आपसे पूछना, मुझे भी शर्म आती है। लेकिन जो इस हाउस में गलत बात कहते हैं, अगर उसको retort करना है, जब मैं उठता हूँ, तो मुझे भी वही हक होना चाहिए।*

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, Sir, you are digressing now. ...(*Interruptions*)... Nothing will go on record now. ...(*Interruptions*)... I am sorry, nothing will go on record. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री मल्लिकार्जुन खरगे : *

MR. CHAIRMAN: It will not go on record. ...(*Interruptions*)... Sir, I expect you...(*Interruptions*)... Please bear with me. Nothing will go on record now. ...(*Interruptions*)... Nothing is going on record. ...(*Interruptions*)...

OBSERVATIONS BY THE CHAIR

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I have received five notices under Rule 267. And, imagine the Agenda we have for the day, and we want to have that Agenda suspended! Notice from Shri Jawhar Sircar, Member seeking discussion over sudden spike in terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, while Shrimati Sagarika Ghose, Shri Saket Gokhale, Shri Mohammed Nadimul Haque, Members have sought discussion over fake certificates being used for appointment through UPSC; Shrimati Sushmita Dev has demanded to abolish the National Testing Agency and decentralize the examination process.

Hon. Members, the only listed Business for today is laying of Union Budget 2024-25; Fiscal Policy Statements, 2024-25 and the Budget of Union Territory of

* Not recorded.

Jammu and Kashmir, 2024-25, which is a constitutional requirement in terms of Article 112 of the Constitution of India. I fail to comprehend what these Members want to dispense. Do they not want these Papers to be laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha? Such a liberal use of Rule 267 is not doing any good to us. Hon. Members may also recall that Rule 267 has been rarely resorted to in the past. Last time, it was accepted in 2016. Keeping in view the fact... *...(Interruptions)*.. One minute, take your seat. Keeping in view the fact that in the past 36 years, this provision has been allowed only on about six occasions, -- and I get a number of these on every sitting of the Session -- I urge the Members and the floor leaders to seriously reflect and introspect this indiscriminate resort to the provisions of Rule 267 on a daily basis, virtually without exception, when the House is in Session. These notices do not conform to the directives imparted by the Chair in this behalf, the same I cannot persuade myself to accept.

DR. JOHN BRITTAS (Kerala): Sir,...*(Interruptions)*..

THE UNION BUDGET, 2024-25

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, the Finance Minister, Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman deserves congratulations and accolades for the milestones she has to her credit while presenting the Budget before Parliament. The Budget is Shrimati Sitharaman's seventh consecutive Union Budget since 2019, including an interim one in February this year. The only Finance Minister to have done so, she surpasses the record of Shri Morarji Desai, who had presented six consecutive Budgets from 1959 to 1964 including an Interim Budget. The Finance Minister, Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman, happens to be Bharat's first full-time woman Finance Minister appointed in 2019. She happens to be the first Finance Minister to present Budget of the most populous nation...*(Interruptions)*... first woman Finance Minister to present Budget for a Government that is continually in its third term. *...(Interruptions)*... Hon. Members, these accolades, in a sense, also exemplify Bharat's emerging empowerment of women and women-led empowerment. Now, the Union Budget 2024-25, Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman. *...(Interruptions)*...

(At this stage, some hon. Members left the Chamber.)

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): Sir, I lay on the Table, a statement (in English and Hindi) of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government, for the year 2024-25.

[Placed in Library. See No. L. T. 189/18/24]

FISCAL POLICY STATEMENTS, 2024-25

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, Fiscal Policy Statements, 2024-25. Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): Sir, I lay on the Table, under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003, a copy each (in English and Hindi) of the following papers:-

- (i) Medium-term Fiscal Policy cum Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement;
- (ii) Macro-Economic Framework Statement.

[Placed in Library. See No. L. T. 190/18/24]

THE BUDGET OF UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, 2024-25

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Budget of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, 2024-25; Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): Sir, I lay on the Table, statements (in English and Hindi) of the estimated receipts and expenditure (2024-25) of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (with Legislature).

[Placed in Library. See No. L. T. 190A/18/24]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned to meet at 11.00 A.M. on Wednesday, the 24th July, 2024.

The House then adjourned at fifty minutes past one of the clock till eleven of the clock on Wednesday, the 24th July, 2024.

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