

RAJYA SABHA

*SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Wednesday, August 7, 2019 / Shravana 16, 1941 (Saka)

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I rise in deep sorrow and with a heavy heart to inform the House of the sudden demise of **Shrimati Sushma Swaraj**, a former Member of Rajya Sabha, and former Union Minister, last night. Destiny has snatched an assuring and contagious smile from our midst.

She was a Member of this House for three terms- from April, 1990 to April, 1996; from April, 2000 to April, 2006; and again from April, 2006 to May, 2009. She was also elected four times to the Lok Sabha in 1996, 1998, 2009 and 2014. She was first elected to the Haryana Legislative Assembly in 1977.

As Union Minister, she held the important portfolios of External Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Parliamentary Affairs and Information and Broadcasting and acquitted herself admirably winning acclaim across political spectrum.

*This Synopsis is not an authoritative record of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.

As a legislator and Minister in the Union and Haryana Governments, and with her commitment and devotion to the cause of the people and the country in her four decade long stint in public life, Shrimati Sushma Swaraj emerged as a role model.

As a Minister of External Affairs, she imparted a human touch to that Ministry by being in the forefront of rescuing Indians in distress in several parts of the world. She had come to be known as the most accessible Minister, which speaks of her concern for and commitment to the people.

Shrimati Swaraj had several firsts to her credit.

She was the youngest Minister at the age of 25 years in the Haryana Government in 1977.

She was the first woman to be the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha.

She was also the first woman Outstanding Parliamentarian.

Shrimati Swaraj was the first woman Chief Minister of Delhi in 1998. From the youngest Minister, she rose to become the first full time Minister of External Affairs under the present Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi.

Born on February 14, 1952 in Ambala Cantonment in Haryana, the 67 year old Shrimati Swaraj studied Law in Punjab University. The call of direct service to the people drew her into public life. She participated in the movement led by late Shri Jaiprakash Narayan and was elected to the Haryana Legislative Assembly after the emergency in 1977. Since then, she took up several electoral challenges with a smile, demonstrating grit and grace, both in victory and defeat.

Shrimati Sushma Swaraj was a very effective orator with equal felicity in both Hindi and English languages, and left an inerasable imprint of her, both within and outside the Parliament.

A couple of hours before she breathed her last, her public message, after Lok Sabha passed the Bill related to Jammu and Kashmir yesterday, was, and I quote; "I was waiting to see this day in my life-time." This clearly demonstrated her commitment for 'One India- One Constitution'.

The untimely demise of Shrimati Swaraj was a personal loss to me. She was like my sister who always addressed me as 'Anna' (elder brother). She was a regular at family and cultural events at my residence for a long time. Every year, on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, she used to tie 'Rakhi' on my hand. I would be missing this honour this year. This year, as usual, I wanted to go to her house to tie Rakhi. She telephoned to me saying, 'please don't come.' I said, 'why'? She said, 'now, you are the Vice-President of the country. You are not supposed to come to my house. I will come to your house and get the Rakhi tied.' So, she came and then tied the Rakhi. I have lost a valuable sister in her demise, which is an irreparable loss to me.

Shrimati Sushma Swaraj was grace, grit, affection, amiability and ability personified. In her untimely demise, the nation has lost an able administrator, an effective parliamentarian, and a true voice of the people. She always dreamt of an India at its highest glory.

I hope the words and deeds of this exemplary leader will continue to inspire all those in public life.

We deeply mourn the passing away of Shrimati Sushma Swaraj.

(One Minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.)

GOVERNMENT BILLS

1. The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019

The House agreed to the withdrawal of the Bill in the Lok Sabha.

2. The Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2019

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI PRAHALAD SINGH PATEL): I move that the Bill further to amend the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

Discussion not commenced.

3. The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2019

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE, THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND THE MINISTER OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): I move that the Bill further to amend the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

The motion for consideration of the Bill, was adopted.

Clauses etc., were adopted.

The Bill, was returned.

VALEDICTORY REMARKS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, hon. Leader of the House, Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, hon. Leader of the Opposition, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, leaders of various political parties and hon. Members, as the 249th Session of Rajya Sabha concludes today, as the Chairman of this august House, I owe to you all and the people of the country a brief account of the performance of the House over the last 35 sittings. All of you may recall that on the last day of the previous Session which was the last before the General Elections held this year, I submitted a report to the people on the 13th February this year on the functioning of this House over the last five years from 2009 to 2014. While doing so, I shared my anguish over 40 per cent of the precious time of the House lost on account of disruptions. I also referred to significantly lesser number of Bills, 53, passed by this House than that of the other House during those five years. However, I then noted that the optimist in me awaits better days as we move on. I am glad that my optimism has come true during this Session. With great pleasure, I have a turnaround story to report to you all and, through you, to the people of the country who have been patiently waiting for such a run and turnaround in the form of a functional House breaking from the disruptive past.

I compliment all sections of the House for collectively scripting this change. While presenting the positive narrative flowing from this Session, I seek your indulgence as I reel out quite a few comparative statistics. The facts that I present form the basis of 'a new normal' that this august House has risen to during this highly productive Session. I am happy to go on record that this Council of States has lived up to the mandate of defending the federal spirit of our polity by standing up for the rights of the States. This has come out on three occasions during this Session, and the credit for this goes to both the Opposition and Ruling parties. Firstly, while passing the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, the provision of 'consultation with the States' had been converted into 'concurrence of the States' then and there. The second, in respect of the National Medical Commission Bill, the representation of the States has been substantially increased

as against the initial provisions, then and there, by the Health Minister. I have to inform you that these two amendments made by this House have been agreed to by the other House also. In the third instance, the Government agreed to cancel the postal examination conducted in Tamil Nadu when Members raised the issue during Zero Hour. All of you collectively deserve appreciation for this spirit of mutual understanding and accommodation. If you raise an issue and the Government understands it and responds to it with a positive spirit, nothing can stop us from moving ahead. That has been proved on these three occasions.

The House had 39 debates on legislative proposals and issues of public importance through Calling Attention notices, Short Duration Discussions and one Half-an-Hour Discussion. I am happy to note that most of these debates were of good quality with all the sides effectively presenting their views and perspective, which are now a matter of record for posterity. As an illustration, I find it in order to refer to a former Chief Election Commissioner of the Election Commission of India writing a detailed article in The Hindu newspaper on electoral reforms entirely based on the debate in the House on that subject. After a long time, this House witnessed narrowing of divergence in terms of Bills passed by both the Houses of Parliament during this Session. At the start of this Session, I had invited the attention of all of you to the need for Parliament to function with a spirit of synergy between both the Houses. I am glad this has happened so quickly during this Session. During this Session, this House has passed 32 Bills as against 36 Bills by the other House. With this august House turning more productive and purposeful, the negative coverage in the media has almost vanished, for the time being, of course. I am glad to notice, and so are you, with the detailed report by the media about the Bills introduced and passed around this time. I compliment all forms of media for their constructive support by providing a proper report.

Hon. Members, I would now like to present facts about the turnaround and the new normal that has been realized during this Session. In terms of legislative output, with the passage of 32 Bills

during these 35 sittings, this Session is the best in the last 17 years, accounting for 52 Sessions. Thirty-five Bills were passed during the 197th Session in 2002. The best performance in this regard in the last 41 years, since 1978, for which Session-wise data is available, was 37 Bills passed during the 131st Session in 1984. This Session is also the fifth best in the last 41 years. The turnaround during this Session also came out clearly when viewed against the passage of a total of only 33 Bills during the last five Sessions, (244th to 248th) put together. In terms of utilization of the available time of the House, that is, the productivity of the House, with 104.92 per cent productivity, this Session is the best in the last five years since 2014 and coming after 17 Sessions. During the last five Sessions, the productivity of the House ranged from a low of 7.44 per cent to a maximum of 65.60 per cent and the change is gratifying with the House reporting 100 per cent or more productivity for the first time in the last five years. During this Session, no Business was allowed to be transacted for a full two-and-a-half days besides occasional disruptions. A total of 19 hours and 12 minutes of precious time of the House was lost on this count. However, the House sat beyond the scheduled time on 19 days and gained around 28 hours. Going by the total time spent on transacting business of different kind, with the total time availed of around 195 hours, this Session is the best of the 36 Sessions spread over the last 11 years since the 213th Session in 2008 the period from when such information is maintained. It is pertinent to note that during the last five Sessions, the total functional time of this House has been only 173 hours and 33 minutes spread over a total of 88 sittings. With 35 sittings, this Session is the longest in the last 14 years. The previous record being 38 sittings during the 204th Session in 2005.

In the context of different opinions expressed over the length of this Session, it is relevant to know that since the inception of Rajya Sabha in 1952 and till 2013, this House had 30 or above sittings per Session 27 times. Of these, 9 Sessions had 35 or more sittings each. The longest session since 1952 was the 9th Session in 1955 with as many as 50 sittings. With a total of 151 Starred Questions taken for oral answers, this Session is the best in the last 14 years coming after 45 Sessions. The earlier record being 165 questions answered during

the 204th Session in 2005. During the last five Sessions, a total of only 175 Starred Questions could be answered during 88 sittings highlighting the change in this Session. In terms of percentage of Starred Questions orally answered, this Session clocking 40.27 per cent is the best in the last 16 years and after 51 Sessions. The 198th Session in 2003 has logged 43.63 per cent. With 5.50 Starred Questions answered on an average, this Session has set up a record in the last 15 years spanning 46 Sessions. During the 203rd Session in 2003, on an average 6.58 Starred Questions were answered. With regard to Zero Hour submissions, this Session has recorded the best of all performance. With 326 Zero Hour submissions, this Session is the best in the last 20 years spanning 63 Sessions since the 186th Session in 1999. Before that no such Session-wise data is maintained here in the House. A total of only 241 Zero Hour submissions could be made during the last five Sessions. As compared to that, this Session marks very high. A total of 194 Special Mentions were made during this Session marking it the best in 12 Sessions of the last four years. One hundred and thirty two such submissions were made during the 237th Session in 2015. A total of only 145 Special Mentions were made during the last five Sessions. This, in effect, means that with this Session being more functional and productive with substantially reduced disruptions, a total of 520 issues of public importance could be raised and brought to the notice of the Government. At this juncture, I would also like to make another important point. Zero Hour and Special Mentions give a very good opportunity to all sections of the House to raise matters of urgent public importance concerning their area, State, region and the country even. Of the total Zero Hour submissions and Special Mentions made in this Session, the ruling alliance accounts for 36 per cent of them only. This drives home the point that disruptions deprive other parties most of the opportunity of raising such issues. The Zero Hour submissions and Special Mentions made during this Session covered a wide range of important issues, including rising drug abuse and trafficking, illegal organ trade, human trafficking, forced religious conversions in Pakistan, growing population and also growing pollution and their consequences, rising road accidents and also its casualties, need for interlinking of rivers in

the context of floods and drought, fake news on social media, crisis in the real estate sector, faulty hip implants, obscenity in print and electronic media, Minimum Support Prices for farmers, checking migration from rural areas, reservation for women in legislatures, justice for the States under the 15th Finance Commission, protection of wetlands, promoting organic farming, enforcement of cyber laws, game safety guidelines for safety of children and even shortage of hearse vans in hospitals etc. Disruptions like in the past would not have made this possible. I want everyone of you to please understand this. So, let us not return to disruptions. Let us stay with the new normal of this session.

Hon. Members, the people of our country have witnessed during this Session what a functional Parliament means and they are acknowledging it and so is the media which plays an important role in amplifying the message flowing out of a functional Parliament. Having reached a new normal in this Session, the task now before all of us is to sustain it without getting back to old ways. The Bills passed during this session have been very significant in terms of their impact on the social and economic landscape of our country. Passing of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, widely known as the triple talak bill is the most far-reaching social reform legislation in the last over 60 years since the passage of Hindu Code Bills. Though there were some differing perspectives, -- Members have got a right to express their views on some provisions of this Bill, -- the broad spirit of the unity with which this House cleared this Bill is praiseworthy and I compliment all sections of the House for the same. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill is another historic legislation. Both these legislations seek to address legacy issues. The national security eco-system has also been further strengthened with the passage of related Bills during this session. At the end of it, all of you have reasons to go back with smiles on your faces having scripted the much needed turn-around in the functioning of this august House. I whole heartedly compliment all of you for the same. And, also, I owe special thanks to the Deputy Chairman, Shri Harivansh, -- though new to this responsibility, he has conducted the House in the most remarkable manner -- all the Members on the Panel of Vice-

Chairmen, Secretary General and his team of hardworking and committed officials and staff, and the Watch and Ward personnel for their untiring efforts during this long session.

Another important highlight of this Session is, many Members spoke in their mother tongue. That is a happy news for the country, happy news for me also personally. Even if sometimes you don't understand the language, we feel at home because people are speaking in our language. If we practice this in the coming days, with the improvement of the translation system further, we will be able to create a new record, a new norm and the best practice so that the others also can follow the same. I also thank the media for the sustained interest all through this Session and enhanced coverage of the proceedings of the House. But, I want to tell the media, our Members sat for longer periods than your members in the gallery. I have been noticing it. The media also should take note of it. You want to cover only, what you call, the early hours. I want to just tell the media, because you are the means of communication to the people, do justice to your responsibility by highlighting our responsibility or irresponsibility if that is there. I am not dictating anything to you. But, you have a duty to see to it that when the House sits up to 9.00 P.M., 10.00 P.M. or 10.30 P.M., your people should also sit, like by having rotation. So, that is my advice to the media. After all, they are also independent in this country and they have got the right to do whatever they want. At the same time, they have a responsibility because we are inviting you to the Session and you have the access to what is happening here. So, you also have a responsibility to do this.

Before I conclude, I want to say one thing. I don't want to take the names; others may think otherwise. Some of the new Members, who have come to this House, I am so impressed by their conduct, by their contributions and the study they are making, and particularly, we are actually showing that we are the Council of States.

Certain Members are making study about their State and then highlighting the need for Central attention, to their State- related issues, while speaking on the other issues also. A very good beginning has been made, and I hope that in the coming days, they will continue

the same. I have also seen that the cooperation between the Ruling Party and Opposition is also improving comparatively. It should improve further. There has to be a dialogue outside the House on more and more occasions, so that such situation can be avoided.

I owe an explanation as to why in the morning I became a little unhappy when somebody said it. I was told that, I do not want to say anything about it, but, Anand ji was also there, that there is broad agreement, that is why, and that too, Jallianwala Bagh is a historic occasion, there is no party politics in this, I had permitted the Minister. Had I known that there is some problem, either I would have gone for the regular route of discuss, debate and dispose or I would have asked them to postpone it. But, if more and more interactions are there, it will be more easy for smooth functioning of the House, and if anybody violates it, of course, the rules are there, and the Chair will take its own way. This is the report I wanted to place before the nation and the people.

(The National Song, "Vande Mataram", was then played.)

The House then adjourned *sine die*.

Desh Deepak Verma,
Secretary-General.

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