

RAJYA SABHA

*SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Monday, March 16, 2026/ Phalgun 25, 1947 (Saka)

FAREWELL TO RETIRING MEMBER

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, today, we bid farewell to our esteemed colleague, Shri Ranjan Gogai, nominated Member of this house, who is retiring today, that is, 16th of March, 2026, on completion of his term of office. Shri Ranjan Gogai, former Chief Justice of India, began his association with the august in March, 2020, following his nomination by the hon. President of India. As a distinguished jurist, he brought unparalleled legal acumen and experience to the deliberations of the Rajya Sabha. His intervention in the Rajya Sabha reflected his deep understanding of legislative processes and public interest. The House will certainly miss his wise counsel, measured intervention and the gravitas he brought to our discussions. I wish that he will continue to contribute to the nation in different capacities with the same dedication, integrity and the spirit of service that he has exemplified throughout his illustrious career. On behalf of the entire House, I extend my best wishes to Shri Ranjan Gogai for good health, happiness and many more years of fruitful service to the nation.

MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

1. Need to Provide Adequate Sanitation and Basic Facilities for Girls in Schools

SHRIMATI RANJEET RANJAN: There is a severe shortage of basic amenities for female students in schools. This is not merely a matter of convenience, but a question inextricably linked to the education, health, and dignity of our daughters. In many schools, separate toilets for female students are not even available. Across numerous states, Government schools lack separate toilet facilities for girls. Due to a lack of sanitation and menstrual hygiene management facilities, approximately 23 million girls are compelled to drop out of school every year. According to UNICEF, suitable toilet facilities for female students are unavailable in nearly 22 percent of schools in India. I urge the Government to conduct a national survey of sanitation facilities in schools across the country and to mandatorily ensure the provision of safe, functional toilets, clean water, soap, and menstrual hygiene facilities in every school. If we truly wish to empower our daughters, we must implement concrete, grassroots-level reforms.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

2. Demand to Establish an AIIMS at Raichur, Karnataka

***SHRIMATI SUDHA MURTY:** To date, an AIIMS facility has not been established in Kalyan Karnataka (North Karnataka). While numerous states possess AIIMS facilities, Karnataka does not. The Raichur district is extremely underdeveloped; it suffers from a severe shortage of healthcare facilities, compelling residents to travel all the way to Bengaluru or Hyderabad to seek treatment for serious ailments. North Karnataka has remained neglected for years, plagued by poverty, health crises, and a lack of educational opportunities. If an AIIMS were to be established in Raichur,

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**Spoke in Kannada.*

local residents would gain access to superior healthcare services, while the youth would benefit from enhanced educational and employment opportunities. Furthermore, such a facility would prove to be a lifeline for the poor and marginalized sections of the district. Therefore, I once again earnestly urge the government to give immediate consideration to the establishment of an AIIMS in the Raichur district, thereby improving the health outcomes of the region's people and ensuring their access to tertiary healthcare.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

3. Demand for Establishment of Eklavya Model Residential School at Chandauli in Uttar Pradesh

SHRIMATI SADHNA SINGH: I wish to draw the Government's attention to a significant issue concerning the education of tribal students in the Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh. A large number of tribal families in this region reside in remote and hilly areas, where children lack adequate educational opportunities. To date, not a single Eklavya Model Residential School has been established for tribal students in Chandauli; consequently, they are compelled to travel to other districts for their studies—an option that remains financially unfeasible for economically weaker families. I earnestly request the Government to expedite the establishment of an Eklavya Model Residential School in Chandauli, thereby enabling tribal children to access free residential education and better opportunities, and ensuring a bright future for them.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

4. Demand for Preservation of Old Koirengei Airfield of Manipur as Part of India's National Heritage

SHRI MAHARAJA SANAJAOBA LEISHEMBA: It is essential to preserve Manipur's historic Old Koirengi Airfield. Constructed in 1942–43, this airfield played a pivotal role in the defence of the Allied forces during the Battle of Imphal in World War II and was instrumental in halting the Japanese Army's advance toward India. It also served as a vital hub for supplies and humanitarian aid for approximately 200,000 Allied troops. While this site holds immense historical significance, its remnants are currently deteriorating due to unregulated construction and other factors. Therefore, I urge the Government to coordinate with the relevant ministries and the State Government to take the necessary steps to preserve the Old Koirengi Airfield as a National Heritage Site.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

5. Demand for Inclusion of State OBC Castes in the Central OBC List

DR. K. LAXMAN: I wish to draw the attention of the House to a significant issue concerning the OBC communities across various states. The National Commission for Backward Classes has recommended the inclusion of 27 castes from Telangana and 5 castes from Andhra Pradesh in the Central OBC list; however, they have not yet been accorded a place in the Central Government's list. Although these castes are recognized as OBCs at the state level and are availing of benefits, they are currently being denied the benefits of reservation in central educational institutions and Central Government jobs. Therefore, I urge the Government to expeditiously implement the recommendations of the National Commission for Backward Classes and include these castes in the Central OBC list, so as to ensure equal opportunities for them in education and employment, and to uphold social justice.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

6. Demand for Introduction of a Vande Bharat Express from Jaipur to Jodhpur via Sikar, Churu and Bikaner

SHRI GHANSHYAM TIWARI: Jaipur is not only the capital of Rajasthan but also a major hub for tourism, religion, and education. Large numbers of devotees visit the city to offer prayers at temples such as Govind Dev Ji, Gopinath Ji, and Moti Dungri Ganesh Ji. The route connecting Jaipur to Sikar is home to significant religious sites—including Khatu Shyam Ji, Jeen Mata, Shakambhari Mata, and Salasar Balaji—which attract hundreds of thousands of devotees annually. Furthermore,

Sikar has today emerged as a prominent educational hub, where over 300,000 students are currently pursuing their studies. Further along this route, in Bikaner, lies another renowned religious site: the Karni Mata Temple. Therefore, in light of the region's immense religious, tourism, and educational significance, I urge the Government to introduce a Vande Bharat Express train service connecting Jaipur to Bikaner via Sikar and Churu, thereby enhancing passenger convenience and fostering regional development.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

7. Demand for Legislation on Withdrawal and Withholding of Life-Sustaining Medical Treatment for Terminally-ill Patients

SHRI HARISH BEERAN: I wish to draw the attention of the House to a matter of utmost gravity. Recently, in a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court permitted the removal of life support systems for a patient in a permanent vegetative state, observing that this issue is intrinsically linked to the right to die with dignity. To date, there exists no explicit legislation on this subject, despite the fact that various reports by the Law Commission and numerous judgments by the Supreme Court have underscored the imperative need to enact a law in this regard. Therefore, I urge the government to introduce a Bill concerning end-of-life care, based on the recommendations of the Law Commission, and to ensure the provision of palliative care services in District Hospitals and Primary Health Centres.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

8. Demand for Effective Implementation of the Right to Education Act in All Educational Institutions

DR. MEDHA VISHRAM KULKARNI: It has been 17 years since the Right to Education Act was implemented in India; yet, today, the illiteracy rate in the country stands at 19 percent, and 16 percent of children aged 6 to 17 remain out of school. We are unable to provide admission to all children. In every state, schools receive applications that exceed their capacity. I believe that by improving the Right to Education policy, justice can be ensured for a larger number of children. Due to the exemption given to minority schools, inequalities have emerged in many places, so admissions under the Right to Education should also be allowed there. At the same time, private schools face difficulties because the reimbursement of fees for reserved seats is not provided on time. Therefore, the Government should formulate a policy that allows admissions in all types of schools, ensures timely reimbursement, and allocates schools based on distance from the student's home so that more children can benefit from quality education.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

9. Need to Address the Growing Problem of Non-availability of Confirmed Railway Tickets

DR. SANDEEP KUMAR PATHAK: I would like to draw attention to the serious problem related to confirmation of railway tickets in the country. A large number of passengers are unable to get tickets and many tickets remain unconfirmed, causing great inconvenience to people. Despite the rapid growth in population, there has not been sufficient expansion in railway tracks, coaches and basic infrastructure. As a result, a significant gap exists between passenger demand and the available facilities. Therefore, it is necessary to expand railway routes, increase the number of coaches and strengthen safety systems so that passengers can get confirmed tickets on time and travel safely. Routes and policies should not be decided based on political considerations; rather, they should be determined by actual needs. Efforts should be made to run the railways efficiently by establishing it as an independent body.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

10. Demand for Stringent Laws to Prevent Disruptions During International Events in India

SHRI JAGGESH: I congratulate the Government for successfully organizing the AI Impact Summit 2026 in Delhi, which highlighted India's growing leadership in Artificial Intelligence and strengthened its global image through innovation, investment opportunities and international cooperation. However, I strongly condemn the disruptive actions by members of the Congress Party during such an important international event, as such behaviour can harm India's reputation and create unnecessary panic. I urge the Government to treat this matter seriously and introduce strict laws to prevent disruptive activities during international events in order to safeguard public order and protect India's global standing.

11. Concern over the Emerging Challenges for Indian Energy Security

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE): Through you, I would like to draw the attention of the Government to the cooking gas crisis in the country caused by the ongoing conflict in West Asia. This crisis is seriously affecting the poor and weaker sections, the middle class, ordinary households, restaurants, hostels, and other commercial users. In many parts of the country, the availability of cooking gas has decreased, creating difficulties in running households, small eateries, and community kitchens. Therefore, I urge the Government to take immediate and effective steps to ensure the availability of cooking gas and maintain price stability. The Government's claim about adequate availability of cooking gas does not match the ground reality. At present, reduced supply, longer waiting periods and increased prices are causing difficulties for common people, farmers, industries and commercial users. In many cities and remote areas, the waiting period for cooking gas cylinders has increased, which is creating anxiety and inconvenience among people. If the possibility of such a crisis was already known, alternative arrangements and proper preparation should have been made in advance. Therefore, I urge the Government to ensure regular supply of cooking gas, control price increases and take strict and effective steps to prevent hoarding and black marketing so that people can get relief. It is the responsibility of the Government to ensure stable, accessible and affordable availability of LPG for the poor, the middle class and small traders.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

12. Demand for Establishment of a New Sainik School at Titilagarh, Bolangir District, Odisha

SHRI NIRANJAN BISHI: I would like to raise a matter of urgent public importance regarding the establishment of a new Sainik School in Bolangir district of Odisha. At present, there are only two Sainik Schools in the State. Since the Government is in the process of establishing 100 new Sainik Schools across the country, I urge the Government to take necessary steps for establishing new Sainik Schools in Bolangir and other LWE-affected districts of Odisha. A feasibility report has already identified suitable government land in Titilagarh, Bolangir, for this purpose. Since Sainik Schools prepare students for entry into the National Defence Academy, Indian Naval Academy and other defence institutions, setting up such schools will provide valuable opportunities for the youth of these regions.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

13. Concern over Rising Drug Addiction, Gang Violence and Gun Culture in Punjab

©SHRIMATI REKHA SHARMA: I would like to say that the rising drug addiction, gang violence and gun culture in Punjab is no longer merely a law and order issue, but has become a serious challenge for society and the future of the youth. Incidents of deaths among young people due to drug abuse are increasing, creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity among families and society. At the same time, crimes, threats and violent incidents are also rising, which makes the situation extremely alarming. Therefore, it is necessary to take strict and effective measures in time to

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address this problem and safeguard the future of the youth and society. I urge the Government to intensify action against drug traffickers and the nexus between police and drug traffickers' network, and support strong enforcement and rehabilitation effort to protect the youth of Punjab.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

14. Need to Ensure Affordable and Accessible Cancer Treatment in the Country

SHRI SANJAY SETH: Cancer is a serious disease that places many families under severe financial strain. The number of cases and deaths in the country is continuously increasing, and the cost of treatment is very high. I appreciate that the Government has approved day care cancer centres to make treatment more accessible and has removed duties on life-saving medicines. However, special additional assistance for cancer patients under the Ayushman scheme is still necessary. At the same time, to prevent wastage of medicines, pharmaceutical companies should be directed to produce drugs in different package sizes and hospitals should implement proper systems.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

15. Concern over Rising Prices of Essential Commodities despite GST Relief

SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI: I would like to state that in recent times the prices of many essential daily-use items have increased, which has placed a greater financial burden on the common people. Items such as soap, shampoo, oil, noodles and other daily necessities, as well as cooking gas, have become more expensive. Due to the rise in production costs, increasing crude oil prices and the weakening of the rupee, companies are facing greater pressure, which has led to price increases, and this is directly affecting consumers. Therefore, I request the Government to take concrete and effective steps to control rising prices and provide relief to the common people. The Prime Minister used to say that when the rupee falls, the country's credibility falls. Now I do not know whether the Prime Minister's credibility is falling or not.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

GOVERNMENT BILL

The Appropriation Bill, 2026 – as passed by Lok Sabha

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): I move that the Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain further sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the services of the financial year, 2025-26, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

SHRI SHAKTISINH GOHIL: While presenting my views on the Appropriation Bill, 2026—introduced by the Finance Minister—I would like to state that, pursuant to Articles 114(1) and 115 of the Constitution, this demand for supplementary grants has been brought forward for a sum amounting to approximately ₹2.81 lakh crore. Specifically, a demand of approximately ₹57,000 crore has been sought for the Economic Stabilisation Fund. The Government asserts that this amount is essential to address disruptions in supply chains and potential shortages of essential commodities such as LPG; however, I am of the firm belief that this situation has arisen, to a significant extent, as a consequence of the Government's foreign policy. India has historically adhered to a tradition of non-alignment and a balanced foreign policy; yet, the current policy stance is adversely impacting our energy supply. I would also like to submit that the situation regarding gas supply is, in reality, a matter of grave concern. While the Government claims that no issues exist, the ground reality is that citizens in numerous locations are compelled to stand in long queues to procure gas cylinders. Similarly, a demand exceeding ₹19,000 crore has been sought for the fertilizer sector, even as the country's imports of Urea and DAP continue to rise steadily. The Government champions the 'Make in India' initiative; however, instead of prioritizing the strengthening of domestic production capabilities, attempts are being made to impose 'Nano Urea' upon farmers—despite the farmers themselves asserting that it fails to yield the desired results. There is also an urgent need to devote serious attention to areas such as the Human Development Index, healthcare, and nutrition. Anemia

constitutes a major public health challenge within the country, particularly among women and young girls. We fully support the demand for additional allocations for the defense sector, as it is solely due to the valor and dedication of our soldiers that the country remains secure; nevertheless, simultaneous attention must also be directed toward bolstering defense research and development capabilities, as well as filling the existing vacancies within the armed forces. Furthermore, I wish to highlight that ex-servicemen are frequently denied medical treatment due to pending payments owed by the Government to various hospitals; this requires immediate rectification. In the telecommunications sector, it is imperative to strengthen public sector undertakings such as BSNL, as they are currently being compelled to operate under competitive conditions that are inherently unequal and disadvantageous. Schemes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission are well-intentioned; however, complaints regarding corruption and incomplete work have surfaced in several places. In conclusion, I would like to state that the Government should give serious consideration to all these issues, so that public funds are utilized effectively and the citizens of the country can derive tangible benefits.

The nation's resources should not be misused and the Government should review the necessity and utility of the large amounts being sought in the supplementary demands, particularly for expenditure related to advertisement, information technology and communication. When departments seek additional grants, it must be ensured that the money is genuinely required and is spent for the right purpose. I request the Finance Minister to consider positively the suggestions I have made on the Appropriation Bill.

SHRI ARUN SINGH: I would like to say that the second supplementary demands for the year 2025-26 have been brought under Article 115 of the Constitution and form part of the financial procedure. Their objective is to assist farmers through fertilizer subsidy, provide foodgrains to the poor, extend facilities such as health and transportation to soldiers and ex-servicemen, and maintain the pace of development in the country. Overall, this additional expenditure has been proposed from the Consolidated Fund keeping in view the needs of farmers, the poor, soldiers and development. Farmers are our *annadata*, and their strength lies in fertilizers, water and technology. Therefore, it has been ensured that farmers do not face any difficulty. Before 2014, there was a shortage of fertilizers, black marketing and heavy dependence on imports, due to which farmers had to buy fertilizers at high prices. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the introduction of neem-coated urea helped curb black marketing. At the same time, nano urea has been promoted, which has been appreciated by members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee as it reduces cost by about 25 per cent and increases productivity by 15–20 per cent. During the COVID period, international prices of urea had risen sharply, but the Government ensured that farmers received urea at just ₹266. Similarly, although the international price of DAP had reached about ₹4,000 per bag, it was made available to farmers at ₹1,350. As a result, foodgrain production has continued to rise and India has emerged as a leading producer of rice. There has also been a significant increase in urea production. Fertilizer plants that had earlier remained closed have been revived, and plants at Ramagundam, Gorakhpur, Barauni and Sindri have been made operational. Total fertilizer production has increased from 332 lakh metric tonnes to 524 lakh metric tonnes, and today about 73 per cent of the country's urea requirement is produced domestically. Foodgrains are also being provided to the poor and deprived sections under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. This scheme, launched during the COVID crisis, has now been extended from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2028, under which foodgrains worth about ₹11.8 lakh crore will be provided to nearly 81 crore people.

The Economic Stabilization Fund is necessary because global crises inevitably affect India. During the COVID period there was severe economic turbulence across the world and prices fluctuated continuously, but under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, various measures helped keep inflation in India among the lowest globally. Even today, conflicts in regions such as West Asia can affect the supply and prices of crude oil and gas. Therefore, a provision of ₹57,381 crore has been made to ensure stability in supply chains and provide relief from excessive price fluctuations. I would like to emphasize that this Government prepares in advance rather than reacting only after a crisis emerges, so that people benefit at the right time. During such crises it is also not appropriate to spread rumours or create unnecessary panic; instead everyone should help build confidence among the people. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, India's global

standing has increased to such an extent that even in difficult circumstances our oil and LPG ships are able to move safely.

Today, the prestige that India has gained globally is due to the credibility and respect of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The fact that 28 countries have conferred their highest civilian honours upon him reflects his global acceptance, and it is because of this that our oil and LPG ships are able to arrive safely even in difficult situations. A provision of ₹41,430 crore has been made for the Ministry of Defence so that there is no shortage in the salaries, allowances, health facilities and other requirements of our soldiers, ex-servicemen and cadets; moreover, the Government implemented OROP on 7 November 2015. An additional provision of ₹10,721 crore has been made for the Department of Health and Family Welfare so that affordable health facilities can be provided in deprived areas, medical colleges and AIIMS can be modernised, and medicines can reach people at lower prices through Jan Aushadhi Kendras. Today the number of medical colleges has increased from 387 to 818 and medical seats have risen from 54,000 to nearly one lakh.

A provision of ₹37,886 crore has also been made for States to strengthen local bodies and provide affordable diagnostic facilities to the poor. Further, an additional provision of ₹17,647 crore has been earmarked for the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways so that the pace of road construction continues. Delhi Metro, the Purvanchal Expressway, the Ganga Expressway and the Bundelkhand Expressway are proof that infrastructure has developed rapidly during the tenure of the Modi Government. The principle of our Government is that development works should not suffer due to shortage of funds, and therefore necessary resources are being provided so that the pace of development continues. Today India is moving forward rapidly and has become the fourth largest economy in the world while remaining among the fastest-growing economies in recent years. India's foreign exchange reserves have also become strong and the country's global standing has increased.

SHRI P. WILSON: The Appropriation Bill, 2026 seeks authorisation for the Union Government to withdraw a large additional amount from the Consolidated Fund of India for the financial year 2025–26 to meet expenditures across several Ministries and Departments. The Schedule to the Bill provides significant allocations to Departments such as Fertilizers, Food and Public Distribution and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. However, I would like to question why more funds have not been allotted to the Food and Public Distribution Department despite the LPG scarcity being faced by the public. I would also like to point out that although funds are allocated under various Demands for Grants, many Departments fail to fully utilise them and there appears to be no accountability for such under-utilisation. Further, I note that there is no additional demand for the Ministry of Social Justice despite the need for adequate scholarships for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to the transfer of funds to the States and the manner in which resources meant for important sectors are handled. The Union Government collects an Education Cess from citizens with the objective of strengthening the education sector and supporting programmes such as Samagra Shiksha linked to the Right to Education. However, despite collecting these funds, the Government has not released the due amounts to States. Tamil Nadu alone is owed nearly ₹3,548 crore under Samagra Shiksha, and though the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education recommended immediate release of these funds, they have not yet been disbursed. In addition, several Central scheme funds amounting to more than ₹10,000 crore remain pending for Tamil Nadu, including allocations under the Jal Jeevan Mission and MGNREGA, which has delayed wage payments to workers. I also wish to highlight the serious crisis in India's textile sector, which employs millions of workers and contributes significantly to the country's GDP and exports. Recent international trade developments affecting cotton sourcing have adversely impacted Indian cotton and yarn exports, putting farmers and textile mills at risk. Major textile hubs such as Tirupur in Tamil Nadu have already witnessed a sharp decline in exports, factory closures and job losses.

The LPG crisis reflects the Government's policy failure. Earlier, when LPG prices were increased by Rs. 50 in 2011, leaders of the present ruling party protested on the streets accusing the Government of being anti-people. Today, even though global crude oil prices remain broadly similar,

the price of domestic LPG cylinders has nearly doubled, placing a heavy burden on households. India consumes around 80,000 tons of LPG daily, but our storage capacity covers only three to four weeks, and about 60–67 per cent of LPG is imported mainly from West Asia through the Strait of Hormuz. This heavy dependence makes India vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions. Instead of strengthening reserves and supply chains, the Government has allowed supply uncertainty and price escalation. The rising costs and irregular supply are affecting industries and small food businesses, including more than 60,000 establishments in Tamil Nadu. While the Union Government has not responded adequately, the Tamil Nadu Government under Chief Minister Mr. M. K. Stalin has provided electricity subsidies for eateries shifting to induction cooking and concessional loans for MSMEs adopting electric cooking equipment. LPG supply appears to be selectively managed in some States approaching elections. This Appropriation Bill of Rs. 2.81 lakh crore, while denying States their rightful dues, reflects centralized fiscal control rather than responsible governance.

SHRI RAGHAV CHADHA: A Budget is not merely an accounting exercise; it is an audit of our priorities. It shows who receives relief, who is asked to wait and who is expected to adjust. I rise not to oppose but to propose, addressing the everyday anxieties of Indians. My first proposal is the introduction of joint filing of Income Tax returns. In India, income of husband and wife is taxed individually, even though their household expenses, investments, and responsibilities are shared. For example, if a husband and wife both earn ₹10 lakh each, their individual incomes remain below ₹12 lakh, and therefore their tax liability becomes zero. However, if one person earns ₹20 lakh and the other earns nothing, then on the same total household income, nearly ₹1,92,400 in tax has to be paid. Thus, despite having the same total income, the tax burden becomes different, which reflects inequity in the tax system. Countries such as the United States, Germany, and France already have this system in place. Therefore, in India as well, married couples should be given the option to choose between individual filing or joint filing. This would recognize the family as an economic unit, bring tax equity between single-income and dual-income households.

The proposal in the Union Budget 2026 to impose income tax on disability pension is unfortunate and it should be removed. Since 1922, disability pension given to members of the armed forces has never been taxed. A soldier joins the army at a young age and serves the nation for years under extremely difficult conditions. Many times, during operations, he gets seriously injured and may even lose a limb. In such a situation, the soldier has two choices—either leave the service and start receiving pension immediately, or continue serving the nation despite the injury. However, if he chooses to continue his service and retires later, his disability pension will now be taxed. In my view, this creates unequal treatment for soldiers who have made the same sacrifice. Disability pension is not a bonus or an additional privilege; it is compensation for the loss a soldier has suffered while serving the nation. A grateful nation cannot salute a soldier with one hand and send him a tax notice with the other. Therefore, the government should withdraw this decision and restore the income tax exemption on disability pension for all armed forces personnel. At the same time, I would like to propose that bank charges for not maintaining the minimum account balance should be abolished. In the last three years, banks have collected around ₹19,000 crore as penalties on this account, most of which has been taken from poor account holders. Workers and small savers often withdraw money during emergencies, after which banks impose a monthly penalty ranging from ₹50 to ₹600, along with 18 percent GST, causing their savings to gradually decline. Bank accounts are meant to provide financial security, not financial stress. If we truly want financial inclusion, we must protect the savings of small account holders and eliminate the penalty for not maintaining the minimum balance.

SHRI MUZIBULLA KHAN: While speaking on the Appropriation Bill, I do not wish to go into figures; my main concern is about those states that face natural disasters every year. In particular, states like Odisha are repeatedly affected by cyclones and floods. In our state, nearly 12 sensitive districts—such as Ganjam, Gajapati, Khordha, Puri, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Balasore and Jajpur—are affected by cyclones almost every year. Therefore, I urge the Central Government to provide a special package for Odisha so that the state can better cope with natural disasters and provide relief to the affected people. Odisha is rich in mineral resources, and large quantities of bauxite, iron ore and coal are produced there. Despite this, there has been no revision in coal royalty for nearly the past ten years. This issue has been raised several times earlier, and former

Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik had also requested the Centre to review and increase the royalty so that the state could generate more revenue and use it for the development of Odisha. At the same time, better railway connectivity and infrastructure are also needed to connect mining areas, as many mining regions are still not adequately connected and remain quite backward.

I would also like to draw attention to the problems of tribal-dominated and backward regions. My district, Nabarangpur, falls under the KBK region. In the past, serious incidents of poverty had emerged there, after which the then Prime Minister visited the area and announced a special package for the KBK districts. However, this package was later discontinued, due to which development challenges in these regions have persisted. Recently, a fire broke out in the ICU of a major hospital in Cuttack, resulting in the death of 10 people, which highlights serious shortcomings in hospital safety arrangements. Therefore, I once again urge the Central Government to give special attention and adequate assistance to strengthen development in Odisha, disaster management, the upliftment of tribal regions, and safety measures in healthcare institutions.

PROF. MANOJ KUMAR JHA: I believe we need to think about who the budget is really for and what its priorities are. I am concerned that important ministries like Labour and Employment, Minority Affairs, Tribal Affairs, and Panchayati Raj have allocations that are almost stagnant, even though their scope is very large. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has already been discussed in detail, but I would like to emphasize that given its wide scope, concern over its allocation should not be just ours individually, but a collective concern for every member of the House. Under the PM-Kisan scheme, farmers received ₹6,000 in 2019, and even today, in 2026, the amount remains the same. This shows that our priorities have not changed. Similarly, the Soil Health Card scheme suffers from a high level of corruption and is largely ineffective, yet this is not acknowledged. I want to suggest that the budget and its priorities be reviewed in line with our inclusive development goals. We must ensure that schemes and allocations reflect real needs and serve the welfare of the people. I said that if nothing else in the matter of Iran, at least the killing of 175 girls could have been condemned. The problems that have emerged as a result of it today are not the concern of any single government alone, but a shared concern of the entire society and the nation. As far as education is concerned, even after independence it has not become a priority for our country. We talk about becoming a Vishwaguru, but incidents like the one involving Galgotias show that we have neglected public-funded education. I have no objection to private education, but there must be clear standards to ensure its quality and accountability. Since the Non-NET Fellowship was introduced, there has been no increase in it, which has created serious challenges for research scholars. Similarly, if we do not invest in SC/ST scholarships and in marginalized communities, it will not be possible to build an inclusive economy and society. In addition, the deaths caused by contaminated water in Indore in the context of the Jal Jeevan Mission are a serious warning—an alarm bell for all of us.

I come from Bihar, which is still struggling with problems such as migration and lack of employment, and therefore it should be viewed from a non-political perspective so that investment in the state can increase. Finally, I would like to express my concern about growing income inequality, which can turn into inequality of opportunities and ultimately affect democracy itself. Therefore, options such as progressive taxation and inheritance tax should be considered, and both the government and the opposition in Parliament should work together on these shared concerns. Economic challenges such as shortages in essential fuels should have been anticipated in financial planning. India's diplomacy carries a moral legacy that should not be weakened. The growing gig and platform workforce forms an important part of the economy and requires a clear framework of social security. Earlier observations of the Supreme Court regarding injustice faced by CAPF personnel also require attention so that such institutional concerns are addressed.

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI: I support the Appropriation Bill while emphasizing that fiscal responsibility and welfare must progress together. Central schemes and financial transfers have provided substantial support to Tamil Nadu, and effective implementation and prioritization by the State Government remain essential. There are concerns regarding the State's financial situation, as projections indicate that Tamil Nadu's outstanding debt may cross ₹10 lakh crore by 2027, with a large portion of borrowings being used to manage revenue deficits. Observations from the CAG report point to issues such as underutilization of funds, inadequate spending under SC and ST sub-plans, and

irregularities in sectors like power. These trends raise concerns about fiscal sustainability and the need for better financial management and governance.

DR. JOHN BRITTAS: The Appropriation Bill authorizes the Government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India to meet expenditure, but the current global situation raises questions about the accuracy of earlier budget estimates. The ongoing conflict in West Asia and the resulting energy crisis have created conditions similar to a major economic disruption, leading to shortages of gas and affecting industries, restaurants and public institutions. Energy supply constraints and black marketing have aggravated the situation, while shortages are also impacting sectors such as fertilizers and manufacturing. Concerns are expressed about the broader economic consequences and about the concentration of financial powers at the Centre through increased reliance on cess and surcharge, which reduces the shareable tax pool for States. Issues such as delays in releasing funds to States and challenges to India's energy security require serious consideration while discussing financial legislation.

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN: The Government has sought approval for supplementary demands of around ₹2.81 lakh crore, but the current economic situation indicates that earlier assessments may not have been accurate. Rising gas prices and shortages have created serious difficulties across the country, leading to closure of restaurants, industries and small businesses. In regions such as Firozabad, several glass manufacturing units have reportedly shut down due to gas shortages. The situation reflects inadequate planning and lack of a clear strategy to address the crisis. Concerns are also raised regarding the condition of farmers, as earlier assurances related to farmer protests, compensation and policy reforms have not been effectively addressed. The issue of minimum support price remains unresolved, with reports indicating that only a small proportion of farmers benefit from MSP. Farmers cultivating crops like potatoes are facing severe distress due to the absence of a clear policy and the wide gap between farm-gate prices and consumer prices.

SHRIMATI SUDHA MURTY: Supplementary grants are a necessary constitutional mechanism because a country of India's scale cannot operate with a rigid annual budget. Changing global conditions such as wars, pandemics and economic disruptions require additional financial flexibility. The current crisis affecting fuel prices is largely driven by global conflicts and supply disruptions, not by domestic decisions alone. Establishing an Economic Stabilization Fund is therefore a prudent step, allowing savings to be set aside to manage unforeseen crises. A significant portion of the supplementary expenditure is directed towards defence, pensions and welfare for armed forces personnel, recognizing their role in national security. Additional allocations for fertilizer subsidies will protect farmers from global price shocks, while provisions under food security schemes ensure that vulnerable populations continue to receive essential support despite rising prices. Strong defence, stable agriculture and responsible financial planning are essential elements of a resilient nation, and the Bill reflects efforts to address these priorities.

SHRI MILIND MURLI DEORA: I speak during the discussion on the Appropriation Bill at a time of rising global uncertainty. Wars and tariff disruptions across the world have created unprecedented challenges, but I believe the true strength of a Government lies in navigating these crises and converting them into opportunities. I highlight that about 60 per cent of India's oil and gas comes from West Asia, and every 10-dollar increase in crude oil prices places a strain of nearly 15 billion dollars on our expenditure and fiscal deficit. At the same time, I point out that Indian workers in the Middle East remit around ₹3.5 lakh crore annually, which remains a strong pillar of our economy. I emphasize that just as India converted the challenge of COVID into an opportunity, we can similarly convert the current challenges in West Asia into opportunities. I state with pride that India today stands as an island of economic and political stability and political sanity, and that the people of India clearly understand the difference between real performance and attempts to create unnecessary panic. I thank the Central Government and the Finance Minister for establishing the Economic Stabilisation Fund, which I note is close to ₹1 lakh crore. I argue that we must also improve the efficiency of public spending. According to me, if even 5–10 per cent of inefficient expenditure is rationalized, India can create fiscal space of ₹50,000–70,000 crore annually without imposing any new burden on taxpayers. I stress that these savings should be redirected toward productive capital expenditure, particularly infrastructure, which has a multiplier effect of nearly two-and-a-half to three

times and helps generate employment and productivity. I also make three suggestions regarding energy security. First, I urge the Government to encourage greater investment in domestic gas production and accelerate offshore exploration to reduce dependence on imports. Second, I recommend expanding bio-CNG and waste-to-gas initiatives, noting that India's agricultural and municipal waste can produce nearly 60 million tonnes of biogas annually. Third, I suggest expanding India's strategic oil and gas reserves so that the country can withstand global disruptions for a longer period.

Finally, I observe that the global balance of power, which remained largely in the West since the end of World War II, is gradually shifting towards Asia, and India can become one of its biggest beneficiaries. I conclude by appreciating the Government for negotiating international agreements from a position of strength and reiterate my support for the Appropriation Bill.

SHRI SANJAY SETH: I stand in support of the Appropriation Bill related to the Supplementary Demands for Grants presented for the financial year 2026–27 and state that it is extremely important for accelerating the country's development, expansion of infrastructure, and social welfare programmes. I also mention that due to the bold decisions taken over the past decade, India's economy has progressed rapidly and the country has moved from being the tenth largest economy to the fourth largest economy in the world. Because of wars and the energy crisis at the global level, economic instability has increased and oil and gas sources have been affected, but under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his farsighted foreign policy, India is standing firmly even in this time of crisis. The two ships bringing gas from Iran will enable the filling of lakhs of gas cylinders, which will reduce the shortage. At the same time, I criticize the Opposition and say that instead of doing politics at such a time, they should support the Government in the interest of the people. I appreciate the Government and the Hon'ble Finance Minister for establishing the Economic Stabilization Fund and also state that a large amount has been allocated for fertilizers and urea for farmers so that despite the shortage of gas, urea production is not affected and farmers continue to receive adequate fertilizers. I also mention that the fertilizer subsidy has been increased. Along with this, I refer to the bravery of the armed forces and speak about the significant increase in the defence budget, stating that through the supplementary demands, additional funds have been provided to the defence sector so that our armed forces do not face any shortage of resources. The Government is providing free ration to nearly 80 crore people, crores of gas connections have been provided under the Ujjwala scheme, and crores of permanent houses and crores of toilets have been constructed for the poor. Additional funds have been provided to further accelerate these schemes, due to which crores of people have come above the poverty line. I also mention the progress made in the field of infrastructure, including the expansion of highways, Vande Bharat trains, the metro network, complete electrification of railways, the increasing number of airports, and the expansion of medical education institutions.

India has presented a new model in the digital sector. The Unified Payments Interface has become the largest digital payment platform in the world, and through Direct Benefit Transfer, a large amount of money is being transferred directly into the accounts of beneficiaries, which has reduced corruption and led to substantial savings. I also state that the country's budget has increased several times over the past years and that allocations for infrastructure have also risen significantly. I further mention that the Reserve Bank of India holds a large quantity of gold reserves and that the increase in gold prices has led to a national gain, a part of which is being utilized for development works. In conclusion, I extend my full support to the Supplementary Demands for Grants and the related Appropriation Bill.

SHRI SANJAY SINGH: The Government has sought approval from the House for a large amount of funds in view of the present circumstances, but I raise the question that this crisis has not arisen suddenly; rather, it has been caused by the policies of the Government. The Government already knew that a large portion of India's crude oil and gas comes through the Strait of Hormuz, yet why was a situation of tension created with Iran. I also remind the House that Iran has been India's traditional friend and that important agreements such as the Chabahar Port agreement were made, which were expected to benefit India's trade. I also allege that the Government remained silent on several international developments, which affected India's relations. Along with this, I criticize the increase in the prices of domestic and commercial gas cylinders and say that it has created a situation

of concern in the country. I also clarify that the Strait of Hormuz has not yet become completely normal and several ships are still stranded there. In the end, I urge the Government to resolve this issue through dialogue. Along with this, I also raise the issue of promotions of officers in the Central Armed Police Forces. Despite being recruited through the Union Public Service Commission, injustice is being done to them in promotions. I propose that in forces such as the Central Reserve Police Force and the Border Security Force, their own eligible officers should be given opportunities to hold senior positions and their rights should not be ignored due to the appointment of officers from the Indian Police Service.

♦**SHRI NIRANJAN BISHI:** Parliament authorizes the Government of India to spend money from the Consolidated Fund of India on development sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and other projects. Nearly 1.5 crore tribal people have been displaced and marginalized due to development projects like mines, industries, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, power plants, and highways, particularly in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh. I point out that many of them have not been properly rehabilitated or resettled and emphasize that adequate funds should be allocated for their rehabilitation. I highlight specific cases such as the Sardar Sarovar Dam and the Polavaram Dam project, where large numbers of tribal families and villages have been displaced and require proper resettlement. I also raise concerns about the closure of thousands of government schools in tribal and rural areas of Odisha and the suspension of admissions in Anwesha Hostels meant for ST/SC students. I urge the Government to allocate funds to reopen schools, support hostel facilities, and provide financial assistance for ST/SC students pursuing courses such as GNM and BSc Nursing. ST/SC communities are not receiving adequate financial support through institutions like the National SC/ST Finance and Development Corporation, and that tribal livelihoods are also suffering due to the lack of Minimum Support Price, subsidies, and market facilities for minor forest produce under TRIFED. I emphasize that the lives of millions of tribal people have become increasingly difficult due to these issues.

Finally, I recall the vision of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to bring ST/SC communities into the national mainstream. I stress that these marginalized and oppressed communities must be supported through proper allocation of funds under schemes like the Tribal Sub-Plan and the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan so that their development and inclusion in the nation's progress can truly be realized.

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****Supplement covering rest of the proceedings is being issued separately.

♦Spoke in Odia.