RAJYA SABHA

VALEDICTORY REMARKS – 252nd Session

(23 September, 2020)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon'ble Leader of the House Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot ji, respected Leader of the Opposition Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad ji, respected Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Shri Prahlad Joshi ji, Hon'ble leaders of various parties and groups in the House and Hon'ble Members !

We are concluding the 252nd session of the Rajya Sabha today. This session has been marked by several novel features induced by the outbreak of novel corona virus at the beginning of this year.

We have to conclude this session **8** sittings ahead of the scheduled **18 sittings** as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge the humankind across the globe even after 9 months of it's outbreak.

We are living in extra-ordinary times warranting several adjustments requiring us to live a new normal life.

We have had 10 sittings during this session during when this august House had to function from six different locations including the chambers of both the Houses of Parliament and four galleries of this House, a first of it's kind in the history of Rajya Sabha.

In another first, we have functioned on Saturday and Sunday of the last week without taking the usual break.

As we were thinking of these readjustment I was not sure as to how the Hon'ble Members would cope with these changes.

I am very pleased that all of you have adapted very well. I have had to familiarize myself with this new situation by having two mock sessions and several rounds of discussions with officials.
I wholeheartedly compliment all of you for making a success of this novel experiment.

Hon'ble Members !

Let me give a brief account of this session. During these **10 sittings**, a total of **25 Bills** have been passed and **6** Bills have been introduced.

The productivity of the House during this session has been **100.47%.** As against the scheduled available time of **38 hours and 30 minutes**, the actual functional time of the House has been **38 hours and 41 minutes**.

While **3 hours and 15 minutes** time of the House has been lost due to disruptions, the House sat for an extra time of **3 hours and 26 minutes**.

I am happy to inform you that the new normal of high productivity witnessed during the last 3 sessions has continued during this session as well.

As a result, the overall productivity of the last **4 sessions comes to a praiseworthy 96.13%.** This high productivity for 4 consecutive sessions is the best during the last 5 years.

22 hours 03 minutes time has been spent on discussing the Government's legislative proposals during these 10 sittings. This comes to a record **57%** of the total functional time of the House during this session.

The significance of this time share spent on legislative business during this session comes out in sharp contrast when viewed against only 28% time spent on Government's Bills over the years since 1952, when the House came into being.

This also explains the primary objective and nature of this unique session during when we had dispensed with the Question Hour besides reducing the Zero Hour to half an hour.

A total of **198** members participated in the discussion on various Bills.

Question Hour being a key instrument of ensuring accountability of the Executive to the Parliament, a total of **1,567** unstarred Questions were replied to in writing by the Government during these 10 sittings.

Members raised issues of urgent public importance through **92 Zero Hour** and **66 Special Mentions** on which a total time of **4 hours 15** minutes was spent accounting for **10.99%** of the total functional time of the House.

Besides, the members of this august House have passionately discussed the important issues especially related to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, its consequences and management and the developments along the border in Ladakh.

Concerned ministers have made elaborate statements on these issues. A total time of **4 hours and 28 minutes** has been spent on these discussions which accounts for **11.55 %** of the total functional time of the House.

Hon'ble Members !

Though this session has been satisfying in terms of productivity, there have been some areas of concern as well. We need to collectively ponder over these issues for making a difference in future.

For the first time in this history of this august House, a notice of motion for removal of the Hon'ble Deputy Chairman has been given. It had to be rejected for the reasons I have elaborated while doing so.

The developments in the House surrounding this unprecedented move have been deeply painful for all those who hold the stature and the dignity of this august House dear to their hearts.

I don't want to go into details of those unpleasant turn of events. All that I like to do is to appeal to all of you from the depth of my heart to kindly ensure that such unseemly behavior is not repeated.

I would like to remind all of you that in 1997 and 2012, this august House had resolved that all the members will uphold the dignity of the House by complying with the Rules and Procedures laid down.If we adhere to these resolutions there will be order in the House and when there is order in the House, the House can function as the country expects it to function. It is the responsibility of all the members to ensure smooth functioning of the House so that we can fulfil our commitments to the people.

I have been associated with this august house for past 22 years, and I get anguished whenever bills are passed in the din.

I am naturally more pained to see that happen as the Chairman of this august House. It hurts me the most when the Chair is rendered helpless by the turn of events and has to perforce take action against the members as per the Rules.

Though it is not the first time that some members are suspended and Bills are passed when some sections of the House boycott the proceedings, I find it extremely unpalatable. This kind of a situation needs to be avoided by all means.

But the Rules of the House do provide for such suspension when it becomes inevitable. If legislative work is not taken up during the boycott by some sections of the House, it may legitimize such boycott as an effective instrument of blocking legislation.

To protest is the right of the opposition. But the question is how should it be done? The floor of this august House is the most effective platform for contestation of ideas.

But if boycott is done for a longer period, it amounts to leaving the very platform that enables you to effectively convey your ideas and contesting those of others. I request all members to keep this in mind.

I now like to briefly refer to some remarks of the Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition Shri Azad ji made yesterday during his intervention. He is known for his courteous, thoughtful articulation

of ideas and sentiments while speaking in the House. But he referred to the lowering of the standing of the LoP in this House. He did not specify the period during when it has happened. But it is an important observation that should not be overlooked.

As far as I am concerned, as the Chairman of this august House, I always reach out to him for his inputs before coming to a decision on any issue concerning the functioning of the House.

I spoke to him several times while planning for this unique session and so was the case on many other issues. I do so because it helps me in discharging my responsibilities. Leader of the Opposition is very central to orderly functioning of the House and it is my firm conviction that diluting his role is unthinkable.

Hon'ble Members!

I thank all Members for attending the session despite all difficulties during these difficult times.

I hope that when you get back to your respective States and Constituencies, you will be available for consultation and guidance that is required by the people to contain the spread of the corona virus and cope with the socio-economic consequences.

This session has been unique in several respects and a challenging one too. All of you rose to the occasion admirably.

It was preceded by several rounds of extensive discussions between me and the Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha and the Secretaries General and officials of the Secretariats of both the Houses. I have also held discussions with the top officials of the Ministries of Home Affairs and Health and Family Welfare, ICMR, DRDO, CPWD etc.

Holding Parliament session during this pandemic required some innovative thinking and elaborate planning, well in advance. Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha and his team in the Secretariat as also the Parliament Security Service, RSTV, LSTV and other agencies including the CPWD who worked behind the scenes, did not fail me in this regard. I would like to put on record my appreciation for the efforts made by them.

I would also like to thank members of the media for their uninterrupted transmission of the Parliamentary proceedings to the people.

Previous session was also cut short on account of the pandemic. We are still to come to grips with the situation. I hope that when we meet next time, we shall do so without the present limitations and restrictions.

I urge all of you to Stay Safe and Stay Connected. Let us win the battle against the pandemic at the earliest.

Hon'ble Members, on behalf of all of you and on my own, I once again place on record our deep and sincere appreciation for all the frontline warriors, those who are ensuring our physical well being like the Doctors, Nurses, Para-medical staff, Sanitation workers and Scientists as well as those who are ensuring our food security like the farmers and providers of essential goods. Equally important is the national security, both internal security as well as protection of borders. We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of the police and armed forces in keeping us and our country safe.

Before concluding, I would like to extend my wishes to all of you for the forthcoming festivals of Dussehra, Dipawali and Milad-Un-Nabi.

Jai Hind !

(After making the Valedictory Remarks)

(The National Song, "Vande Mataram"to be played)

MR. **CHAIRMAN**: The House stands adjourned sine die.