

RAJYA SABHA

***SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE**

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Wednesday, March 24, 2021 / Chaitra 03, 1943 (Saka)

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of **Shri A. Mohammedjan**, a sitting Member of this House, on 23rd of March, 2021 at the age of 72 years.

Born in November, 1948, at Ranipet in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu, Shri A. Mohammedjan was educated at the New College, Chennai and the Government Training College, Vellore. A social worker, Shri A. Mohammedjan strived for the upliftment of the downtrodden, backward classes and minorities of the society by empowering them through education.

Shri Mohammedjan started his legislative career as a Member of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly in the year 2011 and served as the Member of that Assembly till 2016. He also served as the Minister for Backward Classes and Most Backward Classes in the Government of Tamil Nadu, from 2011 to 2013.

Shri Mohammedjan represented the State of Tamil Nadu in this House with effect from 25th July, 2019. It is indeed saddening to lose a colleague so early. He was a gentleman, the finest gentleman I

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

can say. I could understand that from my interactions with him. He was very polite, very simple and duty-minded. It is really very, very sad.

In the passing away of Shri A. Mohammedjan, the country has lost a dedicated social worker and an able parliamentarian.

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

GOVERNMENT BILLS

1. The Finance Bill, 2021

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): I move that the Bill to give effect to the financial proposals of the Central Government for the financial year 2021-22, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

SHRI DEEPENDER SINGH HOODA, initiating the discussion, said: Due to the wrong economic policies of the Government, the country's economy started derailing even before Corona. No provision has been made in this Finance Bill to bring the economy back on track. The growth rate of the economy had slowed down from eight percent to three percent even before Covid. GDP growth at the time of UPA was 11 percent which came to 6.8 percent before Covid. At the time of UPA, the annual industrial investment growth rate was 14 percent which came down to 2 percent by the year 2020. At the time of UPA, there was a 13 percent growth rate in terms of credit and bank loan every year which came down to 4 percent. In private consumption growth, the rate was 24 percent every year which had already come down to 9 percent before Corona. At that time, the growth rate of corporate sales was 12 percent per annum which has now come down to only 3 percent. The export growth rate was 21 percent per year which has now come down to only 3 percent. Demonetisation, hastily implemented GST and mismanagement of the economy during Corona are the factors responsible for this state of the

economy. India's GDP declined the most in the world during Corona period. The biggest difference between the poor and the rich also increased in our country and the most people were also left unemployed. We will not be able to take the economy at the level of 2019-20, before the year 2026. This Government is running in exactly the opposite direction. The status of consumption, investment and export is not good. In UPA's time, the ratio of tax and GDP was 12 percent, which has come down to 9.8 percent in this Government. The Government increased the market debt and increased so much that today the debt-to-GDP ratio has reached 91 percent. During the Corona period, we kept demanding that people should be given money in their hands, the demand be rejuvenated, but you increased government expenditure on CAPEX again. The gap between the poor and the rich in the country has increased considerably. 1 percent of our country's population have control over 73 percent of the country's wealth. The country has reached at second place in the world in terms of difference between the poor and the rich. This Government reduced the corporate tax by 25 percent saying that it would attract investment. But no investment is taking place due to lack of demand. The collection of corporate tax has come down, similarly the collection of income tax has come down. There is no tax on the people whose wealth is increasing, but the petrol, diesel and cooking gas of the poors are being taxed. Tax collection on petrol, diesel and cooking gas has increased to Rs 3.5 lakh crores. Unemployment in the country has taken a dangerous form. As per the NSSO, unemployment is highest in 45 years. 12 crore people became unemployed only in the Corona period. The farmer was hopeful that his income would be doubled but in this budget the allocation of agricultural sector has been reduced by 8.5 per cent. Instead of increasing the MSP of farmers' products and doubling their income the MSP itself has been hit, hence farmers are fighting to save MSP. The minimum support price that farmers were getting on wheat, paddy in 2015-16 should be doubled by 2022, as the income of the farmer will double only when the price is doubled. The cost of diesel is being increased, but the prices of farmers' produce are not being increased. I want to urge that the government should listen to the farmers, show sensitivity to them and

announce the economic package for the 300 farmers whose lives have been lost, make some provisions for their employment. Changes may be made in this Finance Bill which should pave the way for the economy to get back on track again.

SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR MODI: The year 2020-21 has gone through such a huge epidemic, but I would like to thank the Prime Minister of the country, who has dealt with this epidemic in such a great way. Due to this epidemic, there is a revenue shortfall of more than 23 per cent in FY 2020-21. Corporate tax is expected to decrease by about 34 per cent, income tax by about 28 per cent, and GST collection is expected to decrease by about 12 per cent. Everyone had an apprehension that a new tax would be imposed, a Covid tax would be imposed or the tax rate would be increased, as the government is in dire need of revenue, but I am happy that the public was not burdened with any type of new tax. If any new tax is there, it is agriculture infrastructure and development cess through which the government will get more than Rs 30,000 crore. It has been mentioned that this amount will be spent on basic infrastructure of agriculture, APMC mandis and other mandis. Ultimately, the state will spend all this amount. We have worked to keep the income tax rate in India at the lowest as compared to that in all the developed countries of the world. 59 per cent of the income from income tax is received from salaried people, while only 27 per cent comes from business income. Although there has been an increase in the number of people filing returns, there is scope for a substantial increase in the number of people who actually pay income tax. We have tried to bring the corporate tax at par with the BRICS and OECD countries, so that in the forthcoming days, there will be huge investment, manufacturing here. People will get employment when industries are set up and manufacturing takes place. I am confident that it will have far-reaching consequences in the next five years. The tax to GDP ratio was 10.2 per cent of GDP in the year 2011-12, it has increased to 11 per cent in 2018-19. Indian residents above 75 years of age, whose income is only from pension and interest, have been exempted from filing returns. This will reduce compliance burden on senior citizen taxpayers. The government has announced several new steps in

this Finance Bill to resolve tax disputes. The deadline for completing the assessment has been reduced to 9 months, so that tax disputes may be resolved at the earliest. A large number of orders have been passed under the faceless assessment scheme. Similarly, for the resolution of these tax disputes, a scheme called 'Vivad-se-Viswas' has been started which has received historical public support and under this scheme till now 53,000 crores have already been credited in the Treasury of India. In this budget and in the Finance Bill, there is a provision of Dispute Resolution Committee for small taxpayers. The Employees Provident Fund has been capped with respect to tax incentives, as it is meant for ordinary people. In the case of tax audit, the limit of total turnover is being increased to ten crore rupees and this facility will be available only to those who will make their total receipts and total expenditure online. After the introduction of GST, 65 lakh new people have done their registration in GST. With the implementation of GST, in the year 2019-20, the states have achieved a growth rate of 12 per cent, the logistic cost of the business has come down by 25 per cent and the time has been saved. There have been many improvements in GST too. Interest will be limited only to the cash component of the tax. There was a provision in GST for filing audit reports, whose turnover is more than two crore. Now, they have also been exempted from filing the audit report. In the matter of reconciliation statement, which has to be filed had been merged in the annual return. Today, every house-hold has to be provided electricity, toilets, tap-water, where will the money come from? If we are spending the income from diesel and petrol in the development works of the country, then it is also being challenged. If petrol-diesel are enlisted in GST regime, the states would suffer a loss of to the tune of rupees 2 or 2.5 lakh crore. The States will gain only Rs. 14 as GST if petroleum products are put in the GST regime, whereas they are gaining today rupees 60/ The kind of amendments that the central government has brought through the Finance Bill, will have far reaching consequences.

***MS. DOLA SEN: (Spoke in Bangla.)**

* Synopsis of speech delivered by hon'ble Member in Bangla will be published separately as supplement.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK: Raising resources through two methods, the direct taxes and indirect taxes, had huge limitations. Against such limitations, the effort made by the Government and the hon. Finance Minister is, praiseworthy. If you increase the cess and surcharges, which are indivisible, it eats away at this shareable and divisible pool. If you have funds which are created out of the taxes that have been collected for devolution purposes, then again it eats away at the bulk of the shareable and divisible taxes. Now, in such a situation, in the true spirit of cooperative federalism, it is actually necessary that this shareable and divisible pool is increased. If you look at the latest data, the total devolution to the States, as a percentage of Gross Tax Revenue, has declined from 32.36 per cent in 2020-21 Budget Estimates to 30.02 per cent in 2021-22. The State is losing to the tune of Rs.4,673 crores every year due to the impact of the Fifteenth Finance Commission. Most of the leeway that is being given to the States is coming with conditionalities. Several of those conditionalities would probably not be one-size-fit-all kind of conditionalities, which should actually be left to the State Governments to decide. The most important thing in the direct taxes would be to increase the tax base. In our country, out of 130 crores of Indians, only 1.5 crores pay income tax. Most nations in the world have an income tax threshold, that is lower than their per capita income. India is a complete outlier. This particular aspect has to be addressed. Some specific points relating to direct taxes is, equalisation Levy. It requires clarification, whether financial services transactions, business to business transactions, non-profit businesses such as education, healthcare, etc., and inter-company transactions fall within the scope of this Equalisation Levy. In case of the much talked about relaxation of the restrictions for senior citizens, the procedural flaw in is that the interest income must be from the same pension paying bank only and the pension paying bank must be notified by the Government, and for claiming refund, if any, the return has to be filed. This actually brings in the rigour back to the senior citizen. This needs to be withdrawn. The question relating to faceless assessments is

really a welcome development. Whether any such assessment has been made as regards the cost of collection, manpower savings and decrease in time. The data says that whatever cases were referred to CBDT in this faceless transaction method, only 20 per cent have been settled till now. whether this is giving the kind of dividends that it was supposed to give? Finance Bill has talked about data analytics, But data with the State Governments is not being used by the Centralised agencies for analytics purpose or for collection of tax.

Regarding the inter-agency co-ordination for enforcement of taxes, it requires a relook because even though the data between various agencies has improved, the data between the Centre and the States enforcement agencies is not being used. The textile sector requires a different kind of treatment. Unfortunately, despite the input assistance that is being given to them, there is no tax concession on their products which are to be sold outside the country. It is unclear how the BAR would qualify as a Tribunal carrying out judicial proceedings in the absence of a Judicial Member. Wholesale Price Index and the Consumer Price Index need to be fixed.

SHRI T.K.S. ELANGO VAN: Taxation has become the Central subject. When the input cost comes down, the product cost also go down. This is a general rule. In our country, the input cost of crude has come down but the product cost is going up. This is the situation of economy. Daily wagers have been left without wages for the past one-and-a-half years, and for another six or seven months, they are going to be without jobs. Unemployment is increasing. Other industries would fall because domestic consumption has come down. Industries cannot survive, if people do not buy things. So, there is no use of pumping funds into the major industries if people cannot buy. The SARFAESI Act must be revisited and certain provisions be amended. It kills industries. Because of Government's policies, many industries have closed down and because of natural calamities, most of the small industries could not continue function. In a thickly populated country like ours, the Government should concentrate on the poor. Only then can our economy survive. Every State is suffering from want of revenue. The PSUs are the backbone of the economy of our country but this Government has failed in managing PSUs.

SHRI V. VIJAYASAI REDDY: The Government has increased the limit on PF contributions, this is a positive side of the Budget. Senior citizens are exempted from filing income tax returns, but they must be exempted from paying income tax. The Government has decided to make the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal virtual and only documents and evidence can be submitted and thereafter the cases would be decided. I would like to say that personal hearing is the basic stepping stone in the process of delivering well-reasoned and judicious ruling. We need to hear the other side before we decide the matter. Public sector disinvestment has been made easier. A number of notable public sector enterprises have so far got approval for privatization. Keeping in view the sentiments of the people of Andhra Pradesh, the government must save Vizag Steel Plant from privatization. Simply selling PSUs is not the solution. The Government must look into alternative resources for revenue generation, not the disinvestment of Public Sector Undertakings. Interest rates on savings schemes should be increased. Being a pilgrim place, the GST must be waved off for the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, as it is collecting GST from pilgrims who are staying in cottages. The share of Andhra Pradesh in taxes devolved by the Centre is falling because it is controlling its population and weightage is given to demographic performance. The Government must reconsider the methodology of devolution of state's share. The State of Andhra Pradesh must be given Special Category Status.

PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV: Employed people cannot hide their income, so they should be given relief in income tax. Now, after the Sixth Finance Commission the class IV employees have also come under income tax net. When I was listening to your budget speech, we were very happy that senior citizens above 75 years will not have to file income tax return. Later, I came to know that these 75 years old people are the ones who are pensioners. Are they not senior citizens who are more than 75 years of age and are running a shop sitting at a paan shop or running a small grocery shop? I want to say one thing that the more people are able to do their business independently, the more their business will grow and the more they will be able to contribute to the revenue of the country. But if they live

in an atmosphere of fear; if they feel that there is a danger of income tax raids all the time, then why would they work more, why would they earn more, why would they work to pay tax? He will confine his business to just take care of his family. Due to the tax imposed on diesel and petrol, they have become very expensive. It is understandable that the tax collected on them is used only in the development works in the states and at the Central level. But this does not mean that you raise the price of petrol and diesel to two hundred rupees per liter. Won't this adversely affect people? The job of the state is to give as much convenience to its people as possible so that they are not burdened. Therefore, state governments should impose tax keeping this in mind. I would urge you to introspect whether your vision of Ram Rajya is in the right direction. The economic system is being hurt every day. On the one hand, people are dying of hunger and on the other, some people have so much money and you keep giving to them rebate. You should consider all these things.

SHRI RAM NATH THAKUR: This government budget has been brought up with two important objectives of 'Aspirational India' and 'Self-reliant India'. Concrete initiatives have been proposed under the budget to build a strong India. Through this budget, a strong foundation has been laid to make the country's economy a five trillion dollar economy. The Covid pandemic had brought the entire world to a standstill, so it is important to focus on the development of health infrastructure so that we are prepared to face any kind of emergency situation. In this, special allocation has been made for vaccination, so that we can save people from this pandemic. Special attention has been paid to the development of the country's infrastructure in this year's budget. Be it rail network, highways or growth of air traffic, every area in the country has received due attention. In this budget, special emphasis is being laid on creating an economic corridor so that people can get employment, new cities are built and the standard of living of the people is improved. The 'Operation Green Scheme' has been formulated so that the produce of the farmers which are perishable, can be preserved and proper arrangements are made for their storage. Through the 'One Nation One Ration Card', the

Government has taken a concrete initiative to remove the hardship of the migrant laborers of the country and the labor class which is involved in other activities, so that if poor people go out in search of employment, so that they do not have difficulty in getting ration, they may get grains easily and they do not go hungry. You must reflect on this.

SHRIMATI JHARNA DAS BAIDYA: The Indian economy has witnessed a sharp contraction of 23.9 per cent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2020. But the silver lining in all this has been the agricultural sector, thanks particularly to the hardworking farmers and farm labourers of the country. The poor people and the lower middle class were the worst-affected in COVID crisis. Not only has there been a big shortfall in corporate and income taxes in 2020-21, the Government is also keen to acknowledge the 'distress' of the corporate sector. According to IMF, between 2015 and 2019, economic growth fell from eight per cent to four per cent. By 2018, unemployment rate went up over 6 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate doubled from 10 per cent to 23 per cent. Despite government's claim that health expenditure is being increased significantly, the Budget documents show otherwise. The budget allocation for Health for 2021- 22 is Rs. 74,600 crores which is Rs. 8000 crores less than the last year's revised estimates. In order to improve the situation of people of the state, I humbly request you to provide extra budget to Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council. This Budget clearly upholds the interests of the market. This is a budget to appease the rich and accentuates the problems of unemployment and rising inequality.

PROF. MANOJ KUMAR JHA: If our government fails, then we also fail. Elements of suggestion should also be found in our criticism, elements of advice should also be found, because criticism is not just for criticism. It sometimes has meaning in it. It is true that revenue collection is necessary. But is it necessary to sell public properties? Such a decision not only changes the ownership of the institution, but also affects the people working in that institution. This type of privatization can create the kind of crisis that the US faced in

2008. Bihar has become a matter of collective concern. The employment situation in Bihar is very pathetic. If there will not be employment opportunities in Bihar, there will not be investment opportunities, there will not be prosperity in Bihar, then there will never be prosperity in the country. If the government wants all-round development of the country, then extra attention needs to be paid to this state. This can be done by giving additional package or status of special state. This province is the undeveloped province of this country and has become a metropolitan satellite. It needs to be taken out from this situation. Education of about 320 million children has been affected in the Covid times. These children come from Dalit, backward and poor sections. The number of girls in them is very high. For them, a nominal provision has been made in the budgetary allocation by the government. The state of malnutrition has become critical during the pandemic. There is also an 18.5 percent fall in allocation in 'Nutrition 2.0'. The rural sector and the agricultural sector have created a silver lining. Allocation in the field of health and education is not satisfactory.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: The Budget has been delivered by the hon'ble Finance Minister in very difficult times. The 'V' shape recovery has started for which we all acknowledge. The Covid problems still exist in the State of Maharashtra, it is really a cause of concern. Therefore, the Covid problem should be factored in for the entire financial year 2021-22. The GST is now the main source of revenue collection for our country. The States have not been able to receive their share of GST. On Direct Taxes also, there has been this assurance of a faceless assessment. Even in a faceless assessment the person who is going to assess would be assessing with the same old attitudes. At least, the appeals and the tribunals do not remain virtual or faceless. There should be a process where the assessee has the chance to appear in person or through his nominee. Privatization and disinvestment has been the core theme of this Budget. In the last one or two years, Government's collections have been as per targets. The proceeds have come from LIC or another public sector undertakings. So, the divestment process has not been a resounding success so far. This year the Government has put an extraordinary emphasis on

disinvestment and divestment. But, because of the Covid situation it may not be able to realise the proper or full value. The base price of petroleum products is changing. The tax is also going up on pro rata basis. Therefore, the collection of taxes is going up phenomenally. It is also driving the prices of so many commonly used products. So, we have to look at taxes on petroleum products in real terms, not in percentage terms. In the last one year, tourism, hospitality, aviation and transportation sectors have been the most badly affected sectors. But there has been given really no relief to these sectors at all. Crores of people in tourism and hospitality sectors have been suffering. Government has to relook at these sectors very meaningfully. There was no mention about an MSME, which really was not taking a loan but needed a loan now. Secondly, on the MSME front, government has not talked of restructuring. It has been a very difficult situation for most of the MSMEs when banks ask for personal guarantees, collaterals. Government is talking of the two Public Sector Banks being privatised. It will lead to a lot of trouble and chaos because there are going to be strikes. We have very good focus on infrastructure. Infrastructure doesn't only mean roads because we collect the cess from petroleum products and we pump it into road building programme. The other sectors in infrastructure, like power, water, sanitation, require a lot of thrust, but there is very little money available for them.

SHRI RAJEEV SATAV: The framers of the Constitution were of the view that both the Houses should have equal role except the Money Bill. In the last six years, this government has a tradition of introducing non-money Bills in the form of Money Bills. At that time there was an attempt to bring 'Aadhaar' in the form of Money Bill. The government is trying to undermine the importance of Rajya Sabha. When the government brought three Bills related to agriculture, the government had the same thinking at that time. If it would have gone to the Select Committee, it would not have been the peasant movement today. The government is afraid to discuss. The government wants to impose the agricultural infrastructure development cess. When 'health' and 'agriculture' are state subjects, then why does the government not share the cess to the state

governments. The price of petroleum products is continuously increasing. When the price of crude oil is going down internationally, why are their prices not being reduced. The government is imposing cess but according to the CAG, a large part of that cess is being used for some other purpose. 10,000 crores of CRF and CRIF cess have been used for different purposes, this is the observation of CAG. In 2018-19, 41,309 crores was collected from health and education cess, but not a single rupee was spent in health and education sector. This is a very serious matter. Now agriculture cess will not be used for the benefit of the farmer, but it will be used to reduce the deficit. Rs. 170 crore had deposited in Krishi Kalyan cess, but no one knows what happened to those rupees. There should be transparency about cess, but Transparency is not visible. Whatever we have made in the last 70 years, this government has been trying to sell that for the last six years, but is not able to sell it. In the last 4 years out of the last 6 years, the government has not been able to achieve the target of disinvestment. Deficit increases because of not achieving the target. Giving money from one company to another is not a real disinvestment. Government was able to disinvest only one of the 24 Central Public Sector Enterprises in 2017-18. It was from HPCL to ONGC. It has a Sale of one CPSE to another CPSE. 51 percent stake of HPCL was given to ONGC. In fact, the target of disinvestment is not being achieved. The country's economy has completely derailed. It is also the responsibility of the Centre to protect the interest of the states in the federal System, but the government is also not doing it properly. About Rs. 20,000 crores of GST of Maharashtra's share is pending. The budget did not provide any tax relief to individuals. 78 thousand crore rupees were received from petrol and diesel in 2014-15 and now about 3.3 lakh crores rupees received. States have not raised taxes in the last 5-6 years. Despite the decrease in the prices of international crude oil are if you do not reduce the prices of petrol, diesel and gas, then it is not a relief to the common people. The people should have been helped by this government in this corona epidemic, it was not done.

SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA: This Covid epidemic has crushed the economy of the world's superpowers. India's economy is coming back on track within 6 months. Today it is a matter of great pride that India is producing 60 percent of the vaccine in the world. India is exporting that vaccine to 72 countries. Today, 25 to 30 lakh citizens of our country are being vaccinated every day. In terms of economy, we have reached almost 96 percent pre-Covid level. In the coming financial year, only India will be able to achieve double digit growth all over the world. We are going to experience a growth rate of 11 to 12 percent in domestic growth in India in the next year. To increase demand, our government has announced 5 mini budgets. Then came the budget and financial bill. In this way, within eight months, 27 lakh crore rupees were allocated for the expenditure of the people of the country. When the economic crisis comes, it definitely affects the aggregate demand. The Minister of Finance introduced the Finance Bill, in which he decided that the maximum amount of money could reach in the pocket of the poor of the country, to the farmers and women. Under the 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana', 1 lakh 70 thousand crore rupees were transferred to the account of 40 crore poor by our government. 80 crore poor were given free grain at the time of lockdown. I want to thank the Minister of Finance that Income tax rates were not increased in this budget. The Fiscal deficit increased by nine and a half percent, but more and more money was spent so that demand could increase and the economy would recover. In 2013-14, a person whose income was five lakh rupees, he had to pay 30,000 rupees in tax and now he does not have to pay any tax. The concession for startups has been extended for one year and a one and a half million rupees concession on home loans has also been extended for a year. In times of economic crisis, we have to spend more and more on infrastructure, this increases demand. Our government has given priority to social infrastructure and physical infrastructure in budget and finance bills. Capital expenditure has been increased by 35 percent in this year's budget as compared to the previous year. In this year's budget, Rs. 1,08,000 crore has been allocated for the road sector. The UPA government had allocated Rs. 33,280 crore in the health sector in 2013-14. This year, the

government has allocated Rs. 2,23,000 crore for the health sector. This is a 570 percent increase in six years. A new scheme 'Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana' has been announced in the budget. This government has increased the MSP by one and a half times within six years. During the time of the Congress government, farmers were paid Rs. 23,880 crore for wheat, while Rs. 75,000 crore has been paid this year, which is two and a half times more. In 2013-14, farmers were paid only Rs. 236 crore for pulses, while in this financial year, Rs. 10,530 crore has been paid for pulses, which is 40 times more. In the year 2013-14, cotton farmers were paid Rs. 90 crore, while in this financial year cotton farmers have been paid Rs. 25,980 crore, which is 300 times more. 1,13,000 crore has been transferred to the account of each poor farmer under 'Kisan Samman Nidhi'. The issue of petrol and diesel prices was raised in the House. It is true that the prices of petrol and diesel have increased. After meeting the expenses, 40 per cent of the price of petrol and diesel goes to the State and 60 per cent goes to the Centre. From 60 per cent of the Centre, 42 per cent is given back to the States. The prices of petrol and diesel should be reduced by the opposition in their States. We have also imposed cess on some items of import (AIDC) in the agricultural sector. The reason for this is that we can increase the infrastructure of agriculture. There must be a balance in demand and supply which we can see in this Finance Bill. India's rank has reached 63 in terms of ease of doing business last year. We have also provided easy loans to the MSME sector. We want to simplify the tax filing process. Efficiency and competitiveness are very important for any organization or government. It is very important to stay in the market. Today many of our public sector undertakings are running in loss. The government has decided to disinvest five public sector undertakings. This decision is being strongly opposed. The UPA government had said that it would bring private investment in government companies. From 1991 to 1996, 31 companies were sold. Disinvestment of One lakh crore rupees was made during 2009 to 2014. The ideology of this government is to develop the country. The opposition is looking for an opportunity to do politics in disaster. The opposition has not only weakened the public sector undertakings but has also done the same

for the economy of the country. In this Finance Bill, we have brought 27 Amendments required for the IPO of Life Insurance Corporation of India. This will give every account holder and general public an opportunity to invest, increase the flow of private capital and bring transparency and accountability to LIC. Even after the IPO, the majority shareholding will remain with the government and the management and control of LIC Company will also remain with the government. The right of each account holder will be protected. The government wants to strengthen the tax system. This time revenue collection is highest in GST. This has happened because we have increased efficiency. The government has generated revenue by resolving tax disputes under the 'Vivad se Vishwas' scheme. A Dispute Resolution Committee has also been formed so that small taxpayers can find resolution of cases without going through the appellate process. We have reduced the period of tax assessment to 3 years. We can see transparency in this Finance Bill. Off budget borrowings are also shown in this budget. In the Corona period, we have come forward with a new thinking, a new policy and a new style of work. I believe that a policy is made for the country, country is not made for the policy. Our government will continuously working on the mantra of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas".

***MS. ARPITA GHOSH: (Spoke in Bangla.)**

SHRI SUJEET KUMAR: We do recognize that the hon. Finance Minister had to present the Budget in very difficult times. We also appreciate that she did a balancing act with very good intentions. There are several good and progressive proposals and propositions in this Budget. A reduction in time-limit for reopening of the income-tax assessment from six years to three years will definitely reduce tax terrorism, as they say. The threshold for exemption from audit has been hiked from Rs. 5 crore to Rs. 10 crore for the business entities

* Synopsis of speech delivered by hon'ble Member in Bangla will be published separately as supplement.

who have 95 per cent of their business in digital form. This will give a fillip to the digital ecosystem of the country. The constitution of Dispute Resolution Committee will definitely help small and medium taxpayers from litigation. Extending the tax relief on affordable housing scheme is a welcome relief for the affordable housing customers. As regards the start-up incentive, I definitely applaud the hon. Finance Minister for extending the relief to the start-ups. But, my concern is that cess and surcharge has increased ten-fold in the last couple of years which is definitely not in the spirit of cooperative federalism. A lot has been said about augmenting the tax base and increasing the efficiency in the tax administration. But, I will certainly make mention of the noise which has been made about giving tax relief to senior citizens. As a Member from Andhra Pradesh was mentioning, it is only concession in the compliance; it is not concession in the tax. I would like to correct an hon. Member who previously said that there is no tax applicable for senior citizens above 75 years of age. They have to definitely file tax returns and even the relief that has been announced comes with a lot of fine print and catch. Also, this Government may consider reducing the excise component in the prices of diesel, which is currently as high as 39 per cent. This will hugely give relief to the common citizen. Allocation for education has been reduced by six per cent over the last year. This is the year when we are rolling out the new Education Policy. Is it that the Government is not serious about education? Even allocation has been reduced in the primary education sector. So, I sincerely appeal to the hon. Finance Minister to reconsider this reduction in the budget for education.

SHRI NARAIN DASS GUPTA: Today, *Maharatnas* are being sold and at present 73 per cent of the wealth is held by one per cent of the citizens. It was said here that the tax has been reduced to zero for income up to 5 lakh rupees, whereas earlier it was 30 thousand. It was not stated that the income of the people has also come down by 25 per cent. It was stated that the corporate tax was reduced to 25 per cent. It was said that this would result in huge growth of the country, industries would grow, investment would be increase, but it did not happen. The tax rate is the same even for small

companies. Firstly small SMEs and small traders should benefit, as tax collection is still increasing due to them. And, tax benefits should be given to partnership firms, and proprietary concerns, which generate more employment. Regarding petrol-diesel, I would like to say that because of this, tax is being imposed upon the poor people. The freight of the truck has also been affected. The government should cut excise duty. This will give a lot of relief to the poor man. The Government should see to it that when a raid is conducted by the tax officials, the particulars of the tax payer is not shared with anybody, as it is a violation under the Income Tax. For the last forty years, there was one provision of the Settlement Commission in the Income Tax Act. It has been proposed to be abolished. In fact, the number of appeals was minimum because of the Settlement Commission and the Government was getting more taxes. So, my suggestion is that this provision should not be abolished. There is a new provision of Purchase Tax that has been introduced. It will increase the voucher work and compliance work. It will not give much benefit to the Government. It will cause only inconvenience to the traders or businessmen. I think the Government should withdraw it. Last year, the 'Vivad Se Viswas Scheme' was introduced and its deadline has been extended, there is still time till 31 March. The Settlement Commission was constituted so that the collection of tax and settlement of the dispute is expedited. If there existed no Settlement Commission today, the appeals would have been much more pending. If the government removes the provision of the Settlement Commission, then after a few years, the 'Vivad Se Viswas Scheme' will have to be brought back. I welcome the faceless scheme, as this scheme is doing well. I would like to make a suggestion here that the way the government has started a faceless assessment, it will be very welcome if the government starts the faceless election system in the same way, because big rallies are organised for which big expenses are incurred. The Finance Minister always consults the big industrial houses for the proposed budget. My suggestion is that the Finance Minister should also hold a post budget meeting with the small industry people and small traders and take their opinion. In addition, our exports are lagging behind. We are also losing foreign

exchange due to the decrease in exports. Therefore, I request the Finance Minister to make provision for any incentive in it, so that the problem of exports can be overcome. This may prevent the privatization of our *Maharatna*. Also, no provision has been made in this budget regarding the purchase of farmers' crops on MSP. Today 6 per cent of the total produce is being procured. Therefore, I request that a provision should be made in the budget for MSP also.

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