

Statement of the Chairman at the conclusion of the 220th Session

MR. CHAIRMAN : Hon'ble Members, the 220th Session of Rajya Sabha comes to a close today. It commenced on 26th July, 2010 and was extended by two days in order to transact essential Government Business.

59 new Members joined the House during the Session. I am confident they would make valuable contributions to the House in the days to come. I am glad to mention that **26** of them have already been made their maiden speech.

Important legislation has been passed by the Council during this Session. Apart from transacting Government Business, the Session provided opportunities to Members to discuss some important issues through (07) the Calling Attention Notices and (02) Short Duration Discussions.

Notwithstanding the impressive work transacted in the course of the Session, the House could not conduct any Business on **5** days. In addition, there were several disruptions and adjournments as a result of which **8** Question Hours were lost.

This is a matter on which I wish to draw attention of the Members. When the rules for the conduct of business were drawn up decades back, it was not visualized that perceived concerns or grievances would be articulated through disruption of proceedings. This is now taking place with disturbing regularity. The practice tramples on the rights of individual Members, detracts from the dignity of Parliament, and has invited public criticism.

Earlier, the Chair, recognizing the need for such articulation on matters of urgent interest and apart from what is covered under Rule 180, sought to seek a solution through the so-called 'Zero Hour' restricted to three minute interventions by up to ten Members. This too does not seem to meet the requirements and, as a consequence, leads to a fairly regular disruption of the Question Hour which is the most effective window available to the individual Member to seek information and accountability.

It is evident that we need to think collectively about the matter and explore possible options for saving the Question Hour from such disruptions. It may be noted that while the other time lost is compensated by sitting beyond the normal hours, it is only the Question Hour which is irretrievably lost in disruptions. The Chair will, therefore, continue its consultations on the re-scheduling of daily items of business in order to strike a balance between expression of perceived concerns and the normal business for the day. One option is to start the proceedings with the 'Zero Hour' at 11.00 AM and take up the Question Hour later in the day.

I take this opportunity to thank the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition, Leaders of various political parties and groups and the Hon'ble Members for the co-operation extended by them for the overall smooth functioning of the House.

I also thank the Deputy Chairman, the Members on the Panel of Vice-Chairmen and the officers and staff of the Secretariat for their assistance and co-operation.