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14.32 hrs.

Title: Consideration and passing of the North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 2002. (Bill passed)

THE MINISTER OF DISINVESTMENT AND MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): Mr. Deputy-Speaker Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

I rise to request the House to consider and approve the North-Eastern Council Bill which has been passed unanimously by the Rajya Sabha with strong support from all sections of the House. Sir, with your permission, I would like to briefly touch upon the salient features of the Bill in three or four minutes.

The Council, as hon. Members know, was set up in 1972. I would read what Mrs. Indira Gandhi said so eloquently as to what was the concept behind setting up the Council. In her inaugural address to the Council, she said:

"The primary purpose of this Council is the development of this region for greater human welfare. The first principle of development is coordinated activity."

This is why the Council was set up because the north-east is now coming under different States and for better coordination this has been set up. She further said:

"This is an organisation of the various political units of this region set up under an Act of Parliament to formulate a coordinated plan for development and welfare. I share the hope expressed by the Governor Shri B.K. Nehru that the Council will gradually grow into an effective coordinating agency for solving the regional problems in an atmosphere of goodwill, responsibility and mutual respect.

I should like the Council to draw up projects which will benefit more than one unit and which can be implemented in this coordinated manner. There are sectors such as transport and communications, power, marketing, institutional financing, training, preparation of feasibility studies for industries, etc. in which a regional approach would be most welcome."

After inaugurating the Council and its establishment, she wrote to all members of the Council of Ministers, her colleagues in the Cabinet. In that she said:

"I inaugurated the North-East Council in November 1972 for a variety of reasons – political, economic and strategic. It is important that the Council should take quick route and function effectively. The object of the Council is to ensure that the existence of a number of political units in the north-east of India does not affect its economic development, that their rapid economic integration is facilitated and that the problems of the region are dealt with as an integrated whole."

That was her idea in setting it up. As the hon. Members from the North-East know, in many ways, the Council fell into disuse over the last some years. In fact, the Secretary of the Council had to be proceeded against in CBI cases and meetings were held irregularly and so on. Now, a great effort has been made in the last four years to revive this Council and make it an effective body. Gen. Sinha, the Secretary of the Council, who just retired, and others worked very hard and it has now become a functioning Council.

This particular Bill that I am requesting you to consider and pass has been going around for almost six to seven years. It was introduced in November-December, 1998. It was reconsidered in March, 2001 by the Government and it was referred to the Departmental Standing Committee in August, 2001 and so on.

The two purposes of this amendment are just simple but significant. One is to include Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council. This has been the aspiration of the people of Sikkim and the Government. The second is in respect of merely being an advisory body. The North-Eastern Council should be made into a regional planning body so that the aims and objectives which Shrimati Indira Gandhi and others had at the time of setting up of the Council can be realised in a more effective manner.

One point is, the Government has reconsidered its own views and also the views that were expressed by the Standing Committee. The point of disagreement has been on the question of inclusion of Governors in the North-Eastern Council. Today, the Council consists of Governors of seven States. Now there will be eight Governors and Chief Ministers. The Government, at one stage, had been told that the Governors should not be there and, in the original amendment that Shri Advani had proposed, the Governors were excluded. But, as you know, in the North-East, the Governor occupies a special position. That is why, that amendment has been taken back and we want the original Act to continue in this regard.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (SILCHAR): We have to accept whatever you have brought. In our Parliament, we cannot change it. But you have made a particular remark just now that the Governor occupies a special position in the North-East, except in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Please explain that point. That will be helpful to us. Otherwise, we accept what you are saying.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You are going to participate in the debate.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, I have got a meeting elsewhere.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I will explain that point and then sit down.

The point is, the position of the Governor is indeed different. Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev, having held very important charges on these matters, knows it. In the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura, there are Autonomous Councils in the Constitution. These are all to be looked after by the Governors of the States. Such a case is not there in any other part of the country. It is not only that. There are nine Autonomous Councils in these States.

Secondly, there are ten other Autonomous Councils under the State Acts. In those also, the Governor of the State has a special responsibility.

As Shri Dev just now mentioned, under articles 371 (a) and 371 (h), in regard to Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, Governors have a special responsibility in regard to law and order.

The third point is, you all know that the security situation in the North-East remains tense. It has been the effort of successive Governments that the persons who are selected and appointed as Governors of the North-Eastern States are not just anybody but persons who have a special background in regard to security affairs. This has been most helpful to us. For instance, in the case of Assam, when a unified command has been made, the person selected as the Governor of Assam had been the Deputy Chief of Army Staff. He has been able to play a very important part there.

The final point is that in some States of North-East there is great stability, as there is stability in some other parts of the country. In Nagaland we have had a distinguished Chief Minister for almost eighteen years. But in other parts of North-East, Governments change frequently and party labels change frequently which leads to a situation in which the continuity of the administration which is required for dealing with both development and security problems is affected. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : We are not including MPs also.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I will come to that.

These are the two main changes. One is the inclusion of Sikkim, on which I am sure, all parts of the House will support. Second, the aim is to make it more effective. The original concept was that instead of being an advisory body, it should become a regional planning body.

I commend that the House consider and pass this Bill which has been passed unanimously by the Rajya Sabha.

SHRI K.A. SANGTAM (NAGALAND): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the North-East Council which was formed in 1972 consists of the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur. However, Nagaland at that juncture, was under the administration of the Ministry of External Affairs. It was subsequently brought under the North-East Council, under the direct administration of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Most of the States mentioned above, being of diverse ethnic groups, were taken out of the State of Assam. These States had come into being after the lapse of several Five Year Plans, when most of the bigger States had been developed and had the benefits in terms of resources. Therefore, the basic infrastructure comprising *Raj Bhawan*, Civil Secretariat, housing for the officers, district headquarters, sub-divisional headquarters and the staff quarters had to be constructed with whatever resources that were made available by the Central Government. Therefore, most of the funds being grants given by the Centre had to be utilised for the development of basic infrastructure and

consequently there was a paucity of funds for economic development, which has consequently resulted in severe under-development of the economy of all the above-mentioned States.

Before I go to the rest of the speech, I would like to make a special mention about the funding pattern of the North-East. I feel pained to state that there is unprecedented rise in the resource gap during the last few years. Of course, that is an all-India phenomenon. But the situation is far worse in the case of North-Eastern States. Their resource base is not only small but also remained almost static. The most important cause for widespread unrest in the North-Eastern region is the stagnant economy. The Central Government should recognise the resource constraints of the States of the region and adopt a realistic approach to overcome the problem. Regional imbalance cannot be overlooked in the name of liberalisation. The present pattern of financing to special category States, which was introduced in the year 1998-99, has completely crippled the finances of the State Governments. It is impracticable and unrealistic to expect the small States with the problems of insurgency, low levels of industrialisation, inadequate infrastructure, inhospitable terrain and negligible investment opportunities to raise resources to meet all the plan and non-plan requirements. A special financial pattern based on ground realities should be adopted for these States so that they are able to stand on their own legs in the foreseeable future. It is neither in the interest of the Centre nor in the interest of the State that the later should be existing at the mercy of the Central Government almost on a day-to-day basis. The Prime Minister convened a meeting of the Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern States on 8th May, 1998.

He had spelt out a Special Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources for the North East. He categorically stated that 10 per cent of the budgeted amount from every Ministry and Department should be taken out and kept in the Central Pool for the infrastructural development of the North East.

In this regard, I would like to refer to Clause 5 (iv) relating to Special Development of Hilly and Inaccessible Areas. It is often seen that the North-Eastern States which had been created in 1972 have not been properly developed. Till today, most of the villages and blocks and even some district headquarters are not properly accessible by transport. Keeping in view all these problems, we have certain roads which have been connected from Delhi to other parts of the North-East. Besides that, the hon. Prime Minister has also made a special pronouncement for linking up the entire North and South, and East and West.

The construction of a proposed super highway announced by the Prime Minister to be constructed, at the start, right from Saurashtra in Gujarat to terminate at in Silchar in Assam, is a good thing. The Government of India should extend this super highway right from Guwahati to Morey. Also a branch line of that main national highway to Morey should pass through Nagaland. The roads should connect Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya. So, these are the things which need to be addressed at the time of the Tenth Five Year Plan.

Then, I come to Clause 5 (v) which talks of providing adequate rail transport facilities. Today, we have the main trunk roads, trunk rail linking Guwahati to Tinsukia, which was actually built by the British Government. It has been converted into broad-gauge. But today we find that in other States there are two or three rail links which connect the different parts of the cities and towns. But, for the whole North-East, where there are eight States, we have got only one trunk rail link. Therefore, I would like to propose that there should be one more rail link which will be useful to the two-way traffic.

Another proposal I would like to make here is about the Trans-Asian Highway and Railway. For some time past, serious consideration for having a Trans-Asian Highway and Railway has been going on. The project is being considered by the United Nation's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific under the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development Project. It is imperative that the NER becomes part of globalisation perspectives and as such the idea of construction of a Trans-Asian Highway/Railway is a welcome step. Once the proposed Trans Asian Highway/Railway is materialized, it will open up great opportunities for having a flourishing trade and commercial relations with the South East Asian Countries. Particularly, the economy of the North-East will be poised for a big leap.

Then, I come to clause 5 (vi) which is about generation of hydel electricity. It is a fact that the North-East has a tremendous potential for viable generation of power in the region, primarily because it has a mountainous terrain. It can also produce an extremely low-cost power. Technical surveys have established that the North-East Region could be a power house for the country. It has also got the capacity to produce one lakh KW of power.

The source of power in the North-East will also be eco-friendly. I would also like to add here that since the terrain in the North-East is mountainous, the cost of constructing the power projects will be much less than that would be incurred in any other part of the country.

Sir, clause 5 (vi) of the Bill refers to promotion of tourism. The North-Eastern Region has a tremendous potential for eco-friendly tourist destinations which have varied ethnic cultures which attract tourists from abroad who prefer such eco-friendly tourist destinations. Then, the people from our friendly countries like Thailand and Myanmar can visit the tourist destinations in the North-Eastern Region at a lesser cost.

The logical procedure of implementing the projects in the North-Eastern Region should ensure that the sanction for all the projects are given well ahead and money is distributed before the Monsoon season starts because the North-East is a monsoon prone area and it receives rain for six months during a year. It is said that the amount of rain that Delhi receives during the whole year is equivalent to one day's rain in the North-East. So, there is a lot of land erosion, flooding and also silting. Besides that, the roads do not last long in the North-East due to heavy rain. Therefore, the North-Eastern Council should work out projects and schemes well ahead of the Monsoon season and the sanction for the projects should be accorded well in time so that tenders can be called and work on infrastructural projects like construction of roads, bridges and power projects can be carried out smoothly. By doing this, we can avoid cost escalation.

Sir, I would like to mention here few points on which the Members of Parliament from the North-East have recently passed a Resolution. I would like to quote the Resolution. It says:

1. "We welcome the inclusion of Sikkim as one of the members of the North-Eastern Council.
2. We agree that the Council shall function as a regional planning body.
3. The function of the NEC should not be merely advisory, but effective and functional.
4. The NEC should shed its role of reviewing security-related matters and public order in the member States.
5. The Governors, who are constitutional heads, shall cease to be the members of the Council.
6. The Chairman of the NEC shall be the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission."

Since most of the Plan money is given from the Central Pool, it is essential that the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission actively participates in the functioning of the North-Eastern Council. Moreover, all the projects that are envisaged for the development of the North-Eastern Region are brought to Delhi for approval and a lot of time is wasted in that process. So, in order to expedite the process, I feel that the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission should be made the Chairman of the North-Eastern Council.

The Resolution further says:

"7. There shall be a Working Vice-Chairman as member of the North-Eastern Council to be appointed by the President of India.

8. The President of India shall nominate eight Members of Parliament, one from each State of the North-East area to be a member of the NEC."

This is the Resolution passed by the MPs from the North-East.

Since most of the States of the North-East region are dependent on Plan money from the Centre, it would be appropriate that the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission should be the Chairman of the North-Eastern Council.

I vehemently object that the inclusion of the Governors of each North-Eastern State should be the Chairman of the NEC because they are only representatives of the Government of India. In the normal practice, it is impossible for a common man to approach the Governor of a State for any important matter which is concerning that particular State. The procedure to meet a Governor is so cumbersome that it is virtually impossible for the common man to request and put forward his position before the Governor.

Very often, it becomes imperative for the Governor, who is chairing the NEC, to give higher priority to petitions from the public of the State. He is governing in the face of such petitions from people of other States.

To top it, there is hardly any accountability on the part of the Governor. Since all elected Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern States are represented in the Council, they are competent to table the projects, schemes and issues for the expenditure from the NEC to their respective States.

Sikkim is an integral part of the North-East. Although it has come into the North-Eastern fold, unfortunately, it has not yet been included in the NEC. I strongly support that the State of Sikkim be included as the eighth Member-State of the NEC.

Lastly, all the departments, namely, Telecom, Postal Services and other departments and Central Ministries, which are under the control of the State of West Bengal, should also be transferred to the NEC. With these words, I would

like to support this Bill.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (SILCHAR): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, though late, I congratulate the Minister for Development of North Eastern Region, Shri Arun Shourie, that he has brought this Bill after getting it passed from the Rajya Sabha.

The Minister also for Disinvestment has disinvested the Chief Ministers and the MPs in this Bill. We are nowhere. But his idea is a novel one. He is giving the argument that for such-and-such reason it is there. I support the argument. But I think, it should be for, say, five or ten years. After that, you do not expect the North-Eastern region to continue with instability and security. You might have to review the situation. That is only my humble view. It should be on record.

Since your thrust is on regional planning and you have brought forward the amendment with a heavy heart, I would like to say that during my term of four years, I have not been able to get for my valley, which is known as Barak Valley, many of the schemes which are lying pending. You are also trying. I do not say that you are not trying. The reason is that when any Minister, whether belonging to the Congress Party or to the present Government, goes, he pays only lip service to the North-Eastern region. In reality, nothing happens.

Now, I will give two burning examples. You are starting a small aircraft service from 25th. I congratulate you for this. It has been our desire. It has been done, very good. But our demand has been that the headquarters of that small aircraft should be Guwahati and not Kolkata. Now, you are operating it from Kolkata. It should be headquartered at Guwahati and not at Kolkata.

Secondly, the basic idea is to inter-connect different State capitals as well as some of the major cities or towns of the North-Eastern region. My constituency is one of them. You have allowed one Boeing service. The air fare is Rs. 3660 from Guwahati to Silchar and back. It is exorbitant.

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That is exorbitant. So, when you extend this service, Silchar-Guwahati must be covered. The Boeing service which is there, should not be there. Now, you will be surprised to know that 82 night service buses are going from Silchar, Karimganj and Agartala to Guwahati. So, this will quicken the movement of the people and the people will bless you for that.

Secondly, about Tipaimukh Dam –you are well aware of it—it has been decided by the Prime Minister to give it to the NEEPCO. Now, the problem is, the expenses on road conversion and flood become uneconomic. If you load the security cost, the power per unit is quite exorbitant. It is more than Rs.8. So, some special funds should be given. The Power Ministry recently, on 2nd, had decided to go to the Cabinet with an appeal that these funds should be given. I know it is at your direction. Since you are the Minister for the North-East, you forget about disinvestment. When that item goes to the Cabinet, you please support us. This is my humble appeal to you. It is because this will not only serve the hydel power but also it will serve the flood reservoir of the Barak Valley, which is already a granary for good crops. Further, it will be improved.

Now, let me come to the Luming-Silchar broad-gauge conversion. The way you are giving money, even my grand children will not be able to travel on this broad-gauge. Every year you are giving Rs.60 crore. Today the cost of the project is Rs.1,400 crore. If every year Rs.60 crore is given, by the time the project is completed, it becomes more expensive. So, this should be considered as a national project. As the Prime Minister very rightly said, from Saurashtra to Silchar, there would be a super highway. I fully support what Shri Sangtam has said that some bifurcation should be made in between different States. Our main communication is through the road.

Thirdly, I come to the Silchar Airport Extension. Rs.20 crore has been sanctioned, but there is a tussle going on among the Defence Ministry and the Airport Authority of the Ministry of Civil Aviation. I met Shri George Fernandes. In front of me, he told the officials to get it cleared. I met the Civil Aviation Minister. He called the officials of the Airport Authority and told them. But even after nine months, it has not been cleared. It is the time when the work can start. If the Boeing service is withdrawn and airbus is there, it will be very good because we are connected with Assam via the Chicken Leg, which will take more time.

Last but not least, you yourself had said in your first presentation that the Assam Government or the Government of North-Eastern Region is for the employees, by the employees and of the employees. That was because our entire overhead revenue income goes to the salaries of the employees. Even then they cut into these expenses. To overcome this problem, as Shri Sangtam said, let this NEC play the role to have a systematic planning whereby the money that is going to the North-Eastern region is properly utilised and it should be making more assets than creating liabilities. Asset-oriented schemes should be taken up. Now, various schemes are taken up by the respective Governments, but not asset-oriented schemes. They give just short-term benefits. There should be long-term benefits. The Central Government

should try it.

With these words, I thank you very much for giving me a patient hearing. I would not be here to listen to the Minister's reply, but I will get the copy tomorrow.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I most humbly say that you be good like this every time when I stand up.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I cannot assure you that always.

SHRI ANADI SAHU (BERHAMPUR, ORISSA): Sir, when I stand here in support of the North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, I feel that it would usher in a welcome change in the administrative pattern and working of the North-Eastern States, including Sikkim. This Bill mostly hinges around two points, one, that the North-Eastern Council should be re-formed and the other, that Sikkim should be a part of the North-Eastern Council.

15.05 hrs. (Shri P.H. Pandiyan *in the Chair*)

As you know, it was an Advisory Council as it was enjoined under 1971 Act itself. But advisory matters do not cut ice. It should have proper implementing authority.

Firstly, this Council, after its amendment, will have formulating and implementing work to do. I have been associated with Assam for the last 30 years. I had a stint of deputation in Assam as a policeman and later on I have been visiting those areas because I have lots of liking for the culture and the manner in which the people have been living. But it is rather unfortunate that things have not gone in a proper manner to ameliorate the difficult conditions of the people living there.

In 1998, the hon. Prime Minister had visited that area. New things have come up. I will first come to the non-lapsable funds. I am not talking of the funds in different allocations itself. The non-lapsable fund that has been created has been going a long way in bringing about lots of work for these people. But the bane of those areas have been – I would only point out a few things – that the Advisory Council, which was formed earlier, had Governors. The Governors have constitutional powers under Article 371, as the hon. Minister had indicated. They were not paying proper attention and one of the Governors was even the Chairman. They would not like to sit because other Governors would not like to come. There was a lot of confusion also. So, the working pattern of the North-Eastern Council was not properly taken up.

Secondly, the Secretariat of the NEC did not seriously undertake the main task of preparing Regional Plans and that was the difficulty in which the North-Eastern areas had been suffering. I give an instance of the Brahmaputra River Board. A very good Board had been constituted with activities relating to centring on Brahmaputra River and numerous tributaries. The meandering of the Brahmaputra is known to everybody. It creates havoc for the people of those areas. But the Brahmaputra Board was not able to formulate its policies because of lack of supervisory control and adequate assistance from the Planning Commission.

Thirdly, it did not develop a high-level of expertise and competence. The North-Eastern Council did not develop the required expertise. The NEC did not get adequate support of the Central Ministry and the Central Ministry also includes the Planning Commission. A set of remote control devices does not help in formulating plans and implementing them. Now, the Planning Commission also did not develop NEC Secretariat as a mini-Planning Commission. Then the schemes and projects of two or more States were not clubbed together. The North-Eastern States have to be clubbed together for different types of works.

The hon. Minister was telling about communication, water supply, electricity. You see, the cascading streams and rivers from the Himalayas down below have the potential for generating hydro-electricity. Unless they are clubbed together, it would not be possible to get the desired result in any way. The schemes and projects of two or more States should have been clubbed together from the earlier stages, right from 1971 onwards.

Last but not least, the difficulties of the North-East have been that their economic viability has been very weak, particularly the agriculture and industrial activity, and this has resulted in rural poverty. As you would see, whether it is the cane growers of the Brahmaputra swamps or the Bamboo basket makers of Meghalaya or the cottage industries in Nagaland, all these have suffered because of lack of initiative so far as the cottage industries and small-scale industries are concerned. Taking all these aspects into consideration, this amending Bill has been brought forward where the elected popular Chief Ministers of that particular part, in that particular region, will be the members of this Council. Of course, I beg to differ with my friend from Nagaland that if there is no Ministry, naturally the Governor has to take part in this activity himself.

That is why it has been a re-formed Council with a view to take up the popular sentiments. But while taking up the popular sentiments, one thing has been lost sight of. The facts which have been lost sight of are the autonomous regions and the State Autonomous Councils. The autonomous regions or the Autonomous Councils which have been formed under the Constitution of India have some more power, some more privileges; whereas the State Councils are just not being taken into account. Take the case of Karbi Ang Long. It does not get adequate attention. I would request the hon. Minister, through you, to pay adequate attention to Karbi Ang Long and North Cachar Hills district. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SANSUMA KHUNGGUR BWISWMUTHIARY (KOKRAJHAR): What about Bodoland?

SHRI ANADI SAHU : Yes, Bodoland is there. Here is my good friend from Bodoland. He would speak on Bodoland. That is why, if I speak on Bodoland, it would be a redundant addition to that thing. You would be speaking on that.

So, I want to tell you here that particular attention has to be paid to the Autonomous Councils which have been founded by the States themselves – about ten of them – as they do not get adequate attention.

Take for example the issues of roads and communications. My friend from Nagaland was mentioning about transport and communications. The old Burma Road and the Still-Well Road should be opened up to traffic and commerce. The friend from Arunachal Pradesh had taken us to Tawang Monastery and we saw the Still-Well Road. It is a very beautiful road. Till 1961 it was quite active. After that, it has gone into dis-use because of very many historical factors. Now, it is time to open that road for commerce with Tibet on this side and from Zero-and. Along with all those places to this side towards Myanmar and even from Nagaland towards Myanmar and all those places.

I had been to Meghalaya also. From Meghalaya you go down South and come to the Bangladesh border and you will be surprised to find that it is like 'water, water everywhere but at times not a drop to drink' in some parts of Meghalaya, although the Cherrapunji and the nearby areas have about 300 inches of rainfall a year because all the water gets drained into Bangladesh. I went up to the border to see as to how it is happening. I went during the rainy season just to see it. I went about a year back just for the heck of seeing as to how the water is being harvested in those areas. I found that Bangladesh is completely a sheet of water and the people are living in the boats and they eat rice and fish and nothing else; whereas the people living in Cherrapunji area had no water to drink because of the drought situation in this particular year itself.

So, we have not harvested the water potential of those areas which require it. As I said, the cascading of the rivers have created more problems than solving those problems for the North-Eastern people themselves. So, here itself, I find that the North-Eastern Council is being given teeth; but the teeth are not very sharp because, in my humble opinion, the Department itself should have functioned from Shillong instead of functioning from Delhi. We have a North-Eastern Council, no doubt about it. But it should have had sharpened teeth, to bite and to act and the Department should have been stationed in Shillong itself. While looking into these things, this screening committee which is being formed to look into the aspects of development should consider this. I do not know whether it will be a bureaucratic tangle or a bureaucratic obstacle or a real popular support for the work of the people of that area.

When I say these things, I say it with due humility. The hon. Minister who has been very active on the activities concerning the North-East, would kindly look into the fact that this screening committee sits not only twice a year but as many times as may be possible and then give a thrust to the work that is required in those areas. Otherwise, like the Brahmaputra River Board, it will be lying idle for years together.

I do not want to take much of the time of this House. With these words I conclude and I say that this is a welcome amendment and it would definitely bring about the overall development of the North-Eastern areas which includes Sikkim.

SHRI NIKHILANANDA SAR (BURDWAN): Mr. Chairman Sir, while taking part in this discussion regarding this North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, it is needless to say that the importance of Council is immense because the topography of that area – nine States are there – is almost same. From 1970s, we have said so much but have done almost nothing. We have miserably failed to develop that area up to the national standard. For that reason, this type of amendment Bill has been brought here by hon. Minister Shri Arun Shourie.

As you know, this region has become a paradise for terrorist activities, anti-national activities. Even our Central Government has failed to provide adequate number of security forces to guard our international borders. Now, we hear so much about the ISI people taking shelter in Bangladesh and in other areas. Killing of innocent people has become very common in Assam and also in Tripura. Then, about Nagaland, we do not know whether that area belongs to our country or not because without the help of para-military forces, one cannot travel throughout that State. We went there, but the security forces did not allow us to move elsewhere. We sat only in the hotel and enjoyed. That is the position in the North-Eastern area.

There is stagnation of economy in that entire area. It requires immediate help from the Centre because that area is full of natural resources. People are very simple and hardy, but no development has taken place in those areas. For that reason, the need of communication should be given priority. We do not know when the railway link between Dharamnagar to Agartala will be completed. No one knows in which year it will be completed. We hear so much about gauge conversion. It requires immediate attention. The number of flights has to be increased and the number of air-links has also to be increased in that area so that these areas have a good connection with the mainstream of our country.

There are different State Governments, I mean, political units and already, probably, nine Autonomous Councils are there, but the co-ordination in the North-Eastern Region Council is a total failure. That should be developed. From 1971-72 onwards, it has miserably failed to do so in co-ordinating the developmental activities. Out of all the failures, the biggest failure is regarding lack of emotional integration of these regions with other parts of the country.

That is the biggest failure in that area. We should take more care of it and try to remove the communication gap existing for nearly 30 years.

Outside separatist forces and imperialists with bad motives are carrying out activities to destabilise our nation. That area is very, very sensitive, and anti-national activities are continuously taking place there, which pose a danger to our national integration. I do not know whether the Central Government is surely alert. Otherwise, it would have taken steps

much earlier to curb these separatist forces and to bring the North-East into the national mainstream.

It is strange that though huge allocations have been made, the expenditure is not done in a transparent manner. So far as the North-Eastern Council is concerned, there is failure in coordination and transparency. Even the Chief Executive Officer or the Secretary of the North-Eastern Council has been relieved on corruption charges. That is the present position, and there is no one to look after that region. If the Central Government is eager to remove the backwardness of that entire area, the loopholes must be plugged in.

We learnt that one website has been set up to view what is going on there, and to coordinate the developmental projects and activities. Sikkim is ahead in many respects, but still, it is underdeveloped. Inclusion of Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council is, no doubt, a good step. This Amendment is nothing but a reconstitution of the North-Eastern Council and to give some powers for developmental planning and for carrying out other activities.

We urge the Central Government to connect the entire area with the national development programmes in various forms. With these words, I support this Amendment Bill.

SHRI BHIM DAHAL (SIKKIM): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the people of Sikkim are very eagerly waiting for this Amendment Bill to be passed to join the North-Eastern Council formally. In fact, it is a red-letter day for Sikkim. Sikkim shares a number of things with the North-East. We have almost common type of ethnicity, and our geographical feature is almost the same. This is a very long-standing demand of the people of Sikkim. I am really grateful to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and, specially, the Minister for the North-East, Shri Arun Shourie, for bringing forward this Bill. On behalf of our beloved leader, Shri Pawan Chamling, and the people of Sikkim, I thank the Central Government and my friends from the North-East, all the Chief Ministers, and the Members of the North-East MPs' Forum.

Inclusion of Sikkim into the North-Eastern Council will go a very long way in integrating Sikkim emotionally into the Union of India. Though Sikkim is a part of India, yet this inclusion will result in its emotional integration with the Union of India. We, specially the Members of Parliament from far-flung areas of the country, speak sparingly or we do not even get an opportunity to speak here in this House. But with the establishment of this Ministry of Disinvestment, a majority of the works of our areas are being done now. I must commend Shri Arun Shourie for this. Whenever I have met him with problems of my State that are unique in nature, may be political or may be relating to old laws that are in existence in the State or may be in regard to developmental activities of the State, he has always been kind to consider them sympathetically. He has become some sort of a guardian of Sikkim. He is the only Minister in the Union Cabinet that I have seen who comes over to the door to say 'bye' when we part. So, establishment of this Ministry and inclusion of Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council will greatly benefit the people of Sikkim.

Sir, our Chief Minister, Shri Pawan Chamling is trying to develop the tourism sector, the power sector and the horticulture sector in the State. Apart from that, he is also trying to improve the roads and bridges in all parts of Sikkim. This Ministry has really helped us in our cause of improvement of these sectors. Shri Shourie has played a liasing role in our effort. I am also grateful and thankful to all my friends from the North-Eastern region. The problems about the development of these areas have been well explained by my friend from Nagaland. We have similar problems in our State as well. The overall national planning might not suit the needs of these areas and therefore, this Ministry would not only be an ideal and model Ministry but would also be a nodal Ministry for looking after the overall development of the North-Eastern region. If development takes place in a good way and in a proper way, then other problems would automatically be taken care of.

Sir, I support this Bill .

SHRI RAJMUKAR WANGCHA (ARUNACHAL EAST): Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Sir, I welcome the inclusion of Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council. The Bill has been placed before the House for consideration today. This Bill was long overdue. There was a lot of deliberations on this Bill to make this North-Eastern Council more effective and transparent in order that it could play a more positive role in all round development of the North-Eastern States. As a Member of the Standing, Committee that went into the various provisions of the Bill, we have expressed our concerns on certain matters. I would like to highlight some of those issues here.

One of the areas of concern was the security role of the North-Eastern Council. Shri Arun Shourie has mentioned about the special provisions that have been given to the Governments of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.

There, I would like to differ. Those special powers have been given to the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh and that of Nagaland on the security matters.

Regarding the North-Eastern Council, since its inception it has never played a role in the security matters. Therefore, we have suggested that more focus should be given, more concentration should be given to the developmental activities. This Council has been there since 1971. We had faced a lot of problems in the North-East. In the State of Nagaland, for the last forty-fifty years we have been facing a lot of law and order problems. In Assam also we have been facing the insurgency problem for the last two decades. In Tripura and Manipur also we have had a lot of law and order problems. However, we have never used the North-Eastern Council to counter the insurgency activities or to tackle the law and

order problems. Therefore, we felt that the relevant provision in the principal Act has remained dormant for the last thirty years. That is the reason why we have suggested that the Council should be divested of its security role. That is the explanation which we have given, and I still stand by it though I support the Bill.

The second issue is about the executive power. In various meetings I have given certain examples to the hon. Minister about the projects and schemes which have not been carried out properly, implementation part has not been looked after properly. The reason for that is like this. Executive power is not conferred on the North-Eastern Council. The moment the schemes and projects are sanctioned and approved by the NEC, they are totally in the hands of the State Government. For instance, we have taken up a road, linking the States in the region. It is in a very pathetic condition. It is taking years to complete one small bridge. On many occasions I have given those instances. So, I would strongly feel that we should confer executive powers on the NEC so that proper implementation of projects and schemes takes place. Otherwise, there is no point in only approving the schemes and projects.

We all are aware of the potential which lies in the North-Eastern States. I do not want to confine myself to one particular State or to one particular Parliamentary Constituency. I would like to see all the North-Eastern States as a whole to develop. We should try and explore possibilities in the field of power. We have great potential, but how much power have we been able to tap? Many of the North-Eastern States are still suffering because of lack of power in spite of having huge power potential. It is not necessary that the North-Eastern Council should spend money in all the States equally. We should talk about the North-Eastern region as a whole. We should speak about the North-East in totality. When we talk about power potential, we cannot expect all the States to have rivers. There are many States in the North-East which do not have rivers flowing in them. How can we expect hydel projects to be established in those States? To tap power, you require huge amounts of money. It may come out in the State-wise data and figures that a particular State gets a particular amount of money from the NEC. However, we must see the purpose for which that money has been allocated to that particular State.

So, there should be a proper coordination among the various heads of the States to see that those areas are being properly explored.

Let us talk about tourism. We do have the tourism potential. But how many tourists visit the North-East? Have we been able to do justice to the Tourism Department in the north-East? How many infrastructures have come up in the last 50 years? Therefore, I feel that the North-Eastern Council has a greater role to play. But I do not know the reason why the Members of Parliament have been excluded here. Whenever we have a meeting with the hon. Minister, he always wants our cooperation; and he always talks about North-Eastern MPs to see that the non-lapsable money should be properly utilised; to see that all the North-Eastern Council projects and schemes should be seen that they are timely executed. But when we talk about sharing the responsibility, he is a little bit different from that opinion.

Though it may not be possible at this juncture, I still feel that the North-Eastern MPs' inclusion would play a more positive role to bring the North-Eastern States together in the mainstream.

So, these are the few areas, which I feel, are missing in this particular Bill. But at the end of my speech, I support this Bill.

SHRI SANSUMA KHUNGGUR BWISWMUTHIARY (KOKRAJHAR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am thankful to you for having given me this opportunity to speak on this very important and serious Bill which pertains to North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 2002.

First of all, I would like to thank Shri Arun Shourie and the Government of India for bringing forward this Bill to get it passed in this august House. Here again, I would like to congratulate all the Sikkimese brethren for having given the scope to be included within the purview of this North-Eastern Council.

Sir, here, I have seen some weaknesses, lacunae and shortcomings in this Bill. Since the very beginning, we have been keeping on trying or persuading the Government of India to include all the North-Eastern MPs as the Members of this North-Eastern Council but very unfortunately, these MPs have been left out in this Bill. This is a very serious lacuna and shortcoming in the Bill.

Then, there is another serious lacuna which pertains to discrimination being done against the most backward sub-region like Bodoland territory, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council area.

Until and unless the Members from the Bodoland Territory Council and the North Cachar Hill Autonomous Council, and Karbi Anglong Hill Autonomous Council are included, the problems of those regions can never be dealt with in a proper way. We have been observing over the last more than five decades of Independence that this Bodoland region, particularly, the entire Northern Brahmaputra valley and some other tribal dominated areas have been very badly discriminated against in all the spheres of developmental activities. Because of that reason, the Bodoland demand has come up and vigorous movement is still going on.

Because of the lack of a clear-cut policy decision and pragmatic approach on the part of the Government of India as well as on the part of the State Government of Assam, unwanted militancy and terrorism have emerged in those areas. That is why, I would like to humbly request the Government of India to include members from the Bodoland Autonomous Territory, North Cachar Autonomous District Council and Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council as members of the North-Eastern Council. We have been observing for the last more than five decades of Independence that this Bodo region and other tribal-dominated areas have been neglected in all the developmental activities.

For example, coming to my Bodoland Territory, there is no good road communication, no infrastructure, in fact nothing has been done. Some twenty years before, two major irrigation schemes were undertaken by the Government of India. These schemes have not been completed as yet, even after elapse of more than 25 years. It is a matter of shame on the part of the Government of India. Why nothing has been done? Likewise, in agricultural sector our area has been very badly discriminated against. In our Bodo area, there is one Kokilabari Central State Farm and the present Government has taken a decision to disinvest one of the biggest agricultural farm in the northeastern region.

I would appeal to the Government of India to revoke the earlier decision which was adopted in regard to Kokilabari Central State Farm and to restore it without further delay.

I would like to request the Government of India to sanction a Central university for the Bodoland territory. Over the last more than five decades of Independence, we have been observing that all the Central universities are located in the non-tribal areas. NEHU is located at Shillong, Nagaland Central University is located at Kohima, Central Agricultural University is located at Imphal, Mizoram Central University is located at Aizawl, Assam Central University is located at Silchar and Tezpur Central University is also located far away from the Bodo land. This sort of collusion should never be repeated by the Government of India.

The Bodoland territory has been deprived in getting a minimum number of airports, which is very essential for the development of the concerned area. Therefore, I would like to appeal to the Government of India to take up certain necessary projects for the development and welfare of Bodoland and other downtrodden and backward tribal areas like Karbialong, North Cachar and so on.

I would appeal to the Government of India to take a policy decision to bring about a lasting political solution to the burning Bodo issue. Until and unless the Government can resolve this burning issue through peaceful negotiation, it can never catch the train. You will miss the train and you will not be in a position to bring an end to terrorism. That is why, my humble and strong request to the Government of India is to take a concrete policy decision to bring about a lasting and honourable political solution to the burning Bodoland imbroglio without further delay.

You should do this in the best interest of according or providing a chance to the Bodo people of this great nation. They happen to be one of the most nationalised and indigenous Indian people. You should give them a chance to live as dignified Indian citizens within the Indian Union along with their own distinct language, culture, and ethnic identity with equal status and dignity at par with the rest of the country.

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली) : सभापति महोदय, पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् (संशोधन) विधेयक, 2002 सदन में प्रस्तुत किया गया है जिस पर बोलने के लिए मैं खड़ा हुआ हूँ। देश के लिए पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों का बहुत महत्व है। वे देश के लिए बहुत महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा हैं। उनका सामरिक और प्राकृतिक दृष्टि से बहुत महत्व है। सामरिक दृष्टि से इसलिए कि इन 7-8 राज्यों की सीमाएं चीन, बर्मा, मियांमार और बांग्लादेश के साथ लगती हैं। इसलिए यह पूरा क्षेत्र बहुत संवेदनशील और हिन्दुस्तान के लिए बड़ा महत्वपूर्ण इलाका है। पहले पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् के गवर्नर साहब सदस्य थे। प्रस्ताव आया कि प्राथमिक विधेयक में गवर्नर साहब सदस्य नहीं रहेंगे। विधेयक का मूल उद्देश्य यही था। फिर उसके बाद फिर संशोधन आया कि गवर्नर साहब सदस्य रहेंगे। फिर संशोधन आया कि गवर्नर साहब सदस्य नहीं रहेंगे। महोदय, इस तरह से इस सरकार में प्रकरणों का मिस-हैंडलिंग हो रहा है। हमको पता नहीं लगता कि किस प्रकार से यह सरकार सोच रही है और मिस-हैंडलिंग कर रही है।

महोदय, जिन मंत्री महोदय ने विधेयक तैयार किया है वे अपने आपको अंग्रेजी के ज्ञाता कहते हैं। मैं उनका ध्यान क्लॉज 3 के सैक्शन 1 के सब सैक्शन (1) की तरफ आकर्षित करते हुए निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि जिसके अंदर लिखा है कि

"The person or persons for the time being holding the office of the Governor of the States."

अब यह "परसन" और "परसन्स" क्यों लिखा है। मुझे अंग्रेजी ज्यादा जानने वाले मंत्री जब इसका उत्तर दें, तब बताएं कि इसका क्या कारण है। गवर्नर के पद पर एक ही व्यक्ति बैठेगा या दो-दो गवर्नर किसी राज्य में होंगे। यदि एक ही व्यक्ति गवर्नर होगा, तो फिर परसन्स लिखने का क्या अभिप्राय है?

विनिवेश मंत्री तथा उत्तर-पूर्वी क्षेत्र विकास मंत्री (श्री अरुण शौरी) : महोदय, चूंकि आठ राज्य हैं और आठ राज्यों में आठ राज्यपाल हैं, इसीलिए परसन या परसन्स लिखा गया है।

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : आठ राज्यों में यदि आठ राज्यपाल हुए, तो भी एक राज्य में तो एक ही राज्यपाल हुआ, फिर परसन्स लिखने का क्या मतलब है। जो अंग्रेजी के ज्यादा जानकार हैं वे हमें इस बारे में बताएं। इसका जो हिन्दी अनुवाद किया गया है वह सही है-

" तत्सम्बन्धी राज्यों के राज्यपाल के रूप में पदासीन व्यक्ति "

फिर परसन्स क्यों लिखा गया है ? इसका मतलब यह है कि ड्राफ्ट बिल के क्लॉज 3 के सब क्लॉज 1 फिर सब क्लॉज (1) जिसमें लिखा है कि-

"The person or persons for the time being holding the office of the Governor of the States."

जो व्यक्ति राज्यपाल के पद पर कार्यरत हैं, सभी राज्यों में वे सभी सदस्य होंगे, यदि ऐसा है, तो फिर यह परसन्स क्यों लिखा गया है, हमें यह समझ में नहीं आता है। यदि दो-दो गवर्नर हो सकते हैं, तो परसन्स लिखना अनिवार्य है अन्यथा नहीं। इसलिए महोदय, मुझे इसमें परसन्स शब्द अनावश्यक प्रतीत होता है।

इसे क्यों रखा गया, यह माननीय मंत्री जी स्पष्ट करें। हमारा कहना है कि जब बिल आता है तो उसमें संशोधन होता है लेकिन इस बिल में उल्टा संशोधन हुआ है यानी पहले यह संशोधन हुआ था कि गवर्नर साहब इसके सदस्य नहीं रहेंगे और अब यह संशोधन हो रहा है कि गवर्नर इसके सदस्य होंगे। यह क्या मजाक है ? इतना ही नहीं पहले चीफ मिनिस्टर भी इसके सदस्य नहीं थे लेकिन अब इसमें सदस्य होने का प्रावधान किया गया है। हमारा कहना है कि आपको एम.पी.जे. से क्या बैर है, क्या कठिनाई है ? जो इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव हैं, 25 लोक सभा के सदस्य हैं और 11 राज्य सभा के सदस्य हैं यानी कुल मिलाकर 36 सदस्य हैं। उन 36 लोगों ने कन्सेंसस किया और कहा कि गवर्नर साहब को आप इसका सदस्य मत बनाइये लेकिन उसे नहीं माना गया। उन लोगों ने यह नहीं कहा कि हम 36 को ही रख दीजिए। यह बहुत बड़ी बाँझी हो जायेगी, यह उन्होंने नहीं कहा। सभी सांसद एकजुट हैं लेकिन सांसदों की बड़ी अवमानना की जा रही है। सरकार बताये कि उनको इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव से क्या बैर है और आपने ऐसा क्यों किया? आप नार्थ ईस्ट के साथ क्यों मिस हैंडलिंग कर रहे हैं ? वह इतना सेंसिटिव इलाका है। इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव तो वोट से जीतकर आते हैं लेकिन आप तो वोट से जीतकर नहीं आये। आप उनके बारे में क्या जाने। आप तो इधर-उधर से चले आये हैं। जो सरजमीं से चुनकर आये हैं, उसको आपने इग्नोर क्यों किया? वे आठ सदस्यों की मांग कर रहे थे। सभी ने कन्सेंसस किया और इस संबंध में एक रेज़ोल्यूशन भी दिया कि कम से कम हरेक राज्य से एक को रखा जाये यानी आठ सदस्यों को रखने की मांग की। गवर्नर साहब चूंकि सेंटर से आते हैं, उसके अलावा राष्ट्रपति जी तीन को चुनेंगे यानी वे सेंटर द्वारा चुने जायेंगे। इन सबको मिलाकर 11 सदस्य हो गये और फिर खुद चेयरमैन भी यहीं से चुने जायेंगे। इस तरह से मिस हैंडलिंग नार्थ ईस्ट के साथ हो रही है। वहां के विकास की बात तो बहुत दूर है। सूरज की रोशनी सबसे पहले पूर्वोत्तर में पहुंचती है लेकिन विकास की रोशनी सबसे बाद में जाती है।

वहां पर उग्रवाद होने या सेपरेटीज फोर्स होने का यह भी एक कारण है। इसके चलते कई राज्यों में कानून व्यवस्था चौपट है। वहां एक्सटार्शन है, मार-पीट है, हिंसा है। वहां बराबर मार-काट हो रही है जिसके कारण हमारे सी.आर.पी.एफ. और बी.एस.एफ. के जवान मारे जा रहे हैं। हमारा कहना है कि केन्द्र सरकार की ओर से मिस हैंडलिंग हो रही है। यह बहुत खतरनाक बात है। आपने इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव की क्यों अवहेलना की है, यह मैं आपसे पूछना चाहता हूँ। उन्होंने इस संबंध में एक रेज़ोल्यूशन भी पास किया।

अब सिक्किम आठवां राज्य है। सिस्टर स्टेट लोगों ने सिक्किम को आठवां राज्य बनने का स्वागत किया है। हालांकि वहां पर उसे पहले से मान्यता मिली हुई थी लेकिन कानूनी तौर पर अब उसे आठवां राज्य बनाया गया है। उन्होंने कहा कि यह एडवाइजरी बाडी के रूप में न होकर प्लानिंग बाडी के रूप में होना चाहिए। यह ठीक है। इसके अलावा इफैक्टिव फंक्शनल बनाने के लिए कहा है, यह भी ठीक है। फिर उन्होंने कहा है कि NEC should set its role of reviewing security related matters and public order in the member States. इसके आगे उन्होंने कहा है कि Governors who are constitutional heads shall cease to be the members of the Council. कोई भी एम.पी. सहमत नहीं है कि वहां राज्यपाल को उसका सदस्य बनाया जाये। पहले सरकार भी उसी राय की थी और वह इस संबंध में विधेयक भी लाई थी लेकिन अब यह कैसे बदल गया ? मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि कौन सी शक्ति लगी है जिससे सरकार के माइंड में यह परिवर्तन आया ? इसके बारे में हम नहीं जानते लेकिन ऐसा हुआ है और कंट्रास्ट अमेंडमेंट हुए हैं। पहले यह अमेंडमेंट आया कि गवर्नर साहब उसके सदस्य नहीं होंगे। उसके बाद यह अमेंडमेंट आया कि गवर्नर साहब उसके सदस्य रहेंगे। The Chairman of the NEC shall be the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission. आपको क्या हर्ज है कि डिप्टी चेयरमैन प्लानिंग कमीशन के रहें। There shall be a working Vice-Chairman as a member of the NEC to be appointed by the President of India. The President of India shall nominate eight Members of Parliament, one from each State of the north-east area to be members of the NEC.

इन्होंने इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव को इग्नोर किया है, वहां से जो जीत कर आए हैं, उनको इग्नोर किया है। इससे खतरा है। इसलिए मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि बाद में जब मामला बिगड़ेगा तो इसकी जिम्मेदारी केन्द्र सरकार की होगी क्योंकि डेमोक्रेसी में इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव को इग्नोर करना, उनकी अवहेलना करना ठीक नहीं है। आठ सदस्यों को उसमें रखने से क्या आसमान गिर रहा है, क्या कठिनाई हो रही है। अभी 17 सदस्य हैं फिर 25 हो जाएंगे, तो क्या फर्क पड़ता है। आपने साल में दो बार उनकी बैठक का फौसला किया है। वहां बहुत भारी कठिनाई है। हमने कांजसिल के कार्यक्रमों को देखा है, बोडो एरिया से लेकर कई जगहों पर हमने भ्रमण किया है। वह नान-फंक्शनल है। यदि इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव उसमें नहीं रहेंगे तो कमेटी का क्या फंक्शन होगा। सिक्किम विधि, व्यवस्था में एक नम्बर का राज्य है। वहां कोई उपद्रव नहीं है। गंगटोक जाने के लिए एन.एच. है लेकिन उसमें जब कभी लैंडस्लाइड या गड़बड़ी होती है तो वह हिन्दुस्तान से कट जाता है। आप आलटरनेटिव हाईवे बनाने का प्रस्ताव क्यों नहीं लाते। आप उस विभाग के मंत्री हैं। सेंटर ने एक विभाग खास तौर से बना दिया है, जो फालतू विभाग है, और आपको दे दिया गया है। एक देश बेचने वाला विभाग दे दिया है। सब झंझट उनको दे दिए गए हैं और ये इस फेरे में पड़े हुए हैं। हाईवे का आलटरनेटिव देने का प्रावधान करना वहां की जबरदस्त मांग है। इसके बिना वहां आने-जाने की भारी कठिनाई होती है। वहां हवाई अड्डा नहीं है, इसकी भी मांग है।

सिक्किम, अरुणाचल टूरिज्म के लिए बहुत सुंदर है। उत्तर पूर्व का पहले नेफा नाम था जिसे डा. लोहिया ने उरवशियम किया। वहां अभी भी गांव बूढ़ा की प्रथा है। हम जो मुखिया चुनते हैं, वहां के प्रधान को गांव बूढ़ा कहा जाता है। आप जानते हैं कि हिन्दुस्तान विद्युत संकट से गुजर रहा है। हिन्दुस्तान में 2012 तक बिजली की एक हजार मेगावाट ऐडिशनल कैपेसिटी होनी चाहिए। बिजली मंत्री बैठे हुए हैं। पन बिजली असली बिजली है। हम कोयला, तेल, अपनी सम्पत्ति जला कर बिजली पैदा करते हैं लेकिन वहां पानी बह रहा है, हमारी सम्पत्ति बह रही है। वहां से हमें मुफ्त में बिजली मिलेगी, केवल कुछ पूंजी निवेश करना होगा। बहते पानी से बिजली निकालना, कोयला जला कर बिजली निकालना, तेल जला कर बिजली निकालना, इसकी कोई तुलना नहीं है। हिन्दुस्तान को प्रकृति ने पन बिजली की पोटेंशिएलिटी दी है। हम मानते हैं कि योजनाकारों ने गलती की है। सौ प्रतिशत पोटेंशिएलिटी, जो सरकार हाईड्रो पावर का इस्तेमाल नहीं करती, वह देश के साथ धोखा करती है क्योंकि बिजली के बिना कोई विकास नहीं हो सकता। नार्थ-ईस्टर्न स्टेट्स, जहां हमारी पन बिजली की क्षमता है, डेढ़ लाख मेगावाट की पोटेंशिएलिटी उन आठ राज्यों में है। ब्राह्मपुत्र और कई नदियां हैं, मणिपुर में है। पन बिजली की योजनाएं जिनमें ढाई हजार मेगावाट की कैपेसिटी है, उसे सर्वोच्च प्राथमिकता में क्यों नहीं रखते। ऐसा करने से पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों का विकास होगा। (व्यवधान)

प्रो. रासा सिंह रावत (अजमेर) : अगर इतनी चिन्ता बिहार की करें, तो आनंद आ जाएगा।

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : आपको बिहार की चिन्ता करने की जरूरत नहीं है। बिहार सक्षम और आत्मनिर्भर है। लेकिन पूर्वोत्तर राज्य जिसके यहां 25 माननीय सदस्य और राज्य सभा में 36 माननीय सदस्य हैं।

16.00 hrs.

उनकी बात की इन्होंने अवहेलना की है, यह प्रश्न है। इसलिए सदन में सब लोगों को विचार करना है कि इस तरह से जो सरकार इलैक्ट्रेड रिप्रेजेंटेटिव की जरा-जरा

सी बात पर अवहेलना करेगी, वह सरकार देश को ठीक नहीं चला सकती है। यह बड़ा देश है, इसे चलाने के लिए बड़ा दिमाग चाहिए, चौड़ी छाती चाहिए, ऊंचा विचार चाहिए, वही इस देश को चला सकता है। इतनी संकीर्ण प्रवृत्ति से यह देश नहीं चलने वाला है, इसलिए ये समस्याएं वहां आएंगी। इलैक्ट्रिक रिप्रेजेंटेटिव्स को सरकार इग्नोर कर रही है, अवमानना कर रही है और ये कहते हैं कि और लोग नहीं बोलें, चुप रहें, सिर्फ नोर्थ ईस्ट वाले बोलें, बिहार के लोग बिहार पर बोलें। हम समझते हैं कि हम देश के हैं और देश का हर हिस्सा हमारा हिस्सा है और उसमें हम बराबरी के अधिकारी हैं।

इसीलिए सरकार को ध्यान दिलाना चाहते हैं कि जो वहां पर पनबिजली और पर्यटन का पोटेंशियल है, उस पर वर्ल्ड टूरिज्म काँसिल ने अभी हाल ही में रिपोर्ट दी है कि इस देश में टूरिज्म में 67 लाख रोजगारों की संभावना है, 67 लाख लोगों को पर्यटन में रोजगार मिल सकता है, जिसमें बिहार भी है, लेकिन नोर्थ ईस्ट का इसमें महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा है, जो टूरिज्म के लिए आर्काण प्रकृति ने प्रदत्त किया है। इसलिए पनबिजली और पर्यटन, दोनों मामलों में काम हो, नहीं तो विकास आपका वहां पर कम होगा। जैसा एक माननीय सदस्य ने कहा कि नहीं तो देश का वह हिस्सा मिलिटेंट्स और उग्रवादी लोगों के लिए पैराडाइज बन सकता है, इसलिए ठीक ढंग से काम होना चाहिए। इसलिए सर्वोच्च प्राथमिकता full utility of the facility of hydro electric power होनी चाहिए।

इसी पर जोर डालते हुए हम चाहते हैं कि नोर्थ ईस्ट काँसिल ठीक काम करे, इसलिए इस पर पूरी निगरानी की जरूरत है। खासकर सरकार ने विभाग बना दिया, इसलिए उस पर पूरी निगरानी की जाये, योजना ठीक बने और 2-3 राज्यों के बीच संतुलन बनाने का सब काम वह करे, तब पूर्वोत्तर का हिस्सा ठीक होगा।

16.02 hrs. (Dr. Laxminarayan Pandeya in the Chair)

महाभारत काल में भी भीम का रिश्ता पौराणिक रिश्ता है, यह सभी ग्रन्थ बताते हैं। हमारा अरुणाचल के हिस्से का, मणिपुर का सब पुराणों और ग्रन्थों में वर्णन है। आपकी सरकार उसे जैसे-तैसे डील कर रही है, इससे काम नहीं चलेगा, ठीक ढंग से पूर्वोत्तर का विकास होगा, तब देश का विकास होगा। पूर्वोत्तर में कुल गांवों की संख्या लगभग 45 हजार है। उन गांवों का विकास, गांव में रहने वाले लोगों का हैरीटेज और जो पुरानी संस्कृति है, उसका रखरखाव और उनका विकास होगा, तब आप यह जो बिल लाये हैं, उसके उद्देश्य, हेतु की पूर्ति होगी, नहीं तो जिस ढंग से हमारे सदस्यों का इग्नोरेंस हो रहा है, उससे लगता है कि सरकार की नीयत में खराबी है और कुछ न कुछ गड़बड़ होगी, इसलिए मैं सावधान करते हुए अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूं।

SHRI VANLAL ZAWMA (MIZORAM): Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you very much for giving me a chance to speak on behalf of my State and my constituency, Mizoram. First of all I would like to thank our Minister, Shri Arun Shourie, who is looking after the North-Eastern affairs for having brought this Bill before the House for consideration.

While supporting this Bill, I would like to point out only two or three aspects. The first point is, which was mentioned by the Members who spoke before me, that no MPs are included in this Council. All MPs have been excluded. In support of the Members who spoke before me, I would like to request the hon. Minister to include one MP from each State of that region. That would solve the problem. As we all know, the final decision is taken in Delhi. All the important issues are discussed in Delhi. In order to represent the North-Eastern States, including MPs in this Council is very important. That is why, in this Council at least one MP from each State of the region should be included.

While supporting the Bill, I would like to make some important points in respect of my State of Mizoram. Some of you may also know that Mizoram is a small State in the North-Eastern Region. It is having three or four of its boundaries as international borders. In the West and South, Bangladesh is there. In the East and South, Myanmar is there. Only the northern portion of Mizoram is connected with the other States of India like Assam, Manipur and Tripura. So, what I would like to say is that in order to develop the North-East, especially Mizoram, three things are very important. The first important thing is road communication. It is a hilly area. It is difficult to lay rail-lines. So, the road communication is very important. Under the Rural Development Ministry, the work relating to rural connectivity is going on. That will solve some of our problems.

My other point is about the electric power. Without electric power, nothing can be done in this modern age. We have enough rivers and enough potential to generate electricity. So, steps should be taken to see that electricity is generated in this area.

Another point on which I would like to lay stress is that we have a market in order to sell our products, especially the agricultural products. Before Independence, before 1947, my State of Mizoram was self-sufficient. The reason was that we could sell our products to some of our neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. At the same time, we could buy meat from those countries. But after Independence, in order to sell all our products to other parts of India and other markets, we have to carry to the northern corner of our State. There is only road communication. Further, we have to pay a lot of money towards carrying charges. So, our economy has slowed down. At present, we have to depend on the other States.

Sir, you also know that in the North-Eastern States, there are so many underground outfits. All the underground outfits, extremist organisations get their things from the neighbouring countries. But a good citizen cannot make use of the neighbouring countries. We are bound by the international boundaries. Even to sell our horticultural products, we have to carry them to the northern corner of our State. Sometimes, we sell some of the things to Bangladesh. I came to know that for our horticultural products, there is a great demand from Bangladesh. But we cannot sell them at our borders. So, opening up our border for trade is very important in order to develop Mizoram. Simply pouring in money is not the right way of doing things. We have to create the infrastructure for the development of the people and the State.

Today, fortunately, our Finance Minister is with us. I would like to request him to look into these matters carefully. In order to develop the North-Eastern States, especially my constituency and my State, we have to open up our door to sell our products. In turn, we have to buy things for our needs. For example, we are buying some items from Calcutta. We have to carry our things to Siliguri, Bongaigaon, Guwahati, Shillong, Silchar and Aizawl. We have to pay a lot of money as carrying charges. At the same time, we are going to sell some of our products to some foreign countries. Further, the demand for our charcoal is very much there. But we have to carry it to Calcutta *via* Guwahati, Siliguri etc. That is the problem that we are facing now. We are a land-locked State. In order to develop Mizoram, we have to open up our border trade with our neighbouring countries.

At the same time, I would like to say that in order to develop the small States in the North-East, we have to construct good roads and also generate power from our own sources.

SHRI P.H. PANDIAN Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to participate in the discussion on the North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 2002.

Sir, the Government has ignored the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Home Affairs, which consists of 49 Members of Parliament, by not accepting to nominate Members of Parliament from each of the North-Eastern States to be members of the North-Eastern Council. The Standing Committee took a unanimous view in this regard. I would like to quote the relevant paragraph here. It says:

"While the Committee overwhelmingly opposed the proposal to retain Governors as members of the Council, it, however, strongly felt that there was need for inclusion of MPs of North-Eastern States and Sikkim in the Council so as to broad-base its representative character. It opined that every State should be represented at least by one of its MPs in addition to its Chief Minister. The Committee was of the view that by including MPs in the Council people's aspirations vis-à-vis the development of that region could be aired in a more articulate manner. Accordingly, it unanimously endorsed the view that the seven North-Eastern States and Sikkim should have adequate and equitable representation of their MPs in the Council."

The Minister has not made any provision for this purpose in the Bill. I am also a Member of the Standing Committee on Home Affairs. We endorsed this view. We wanted that at least one Member of Parliament from each of the North-Eastern State should be nominated to the North-Eastern Council. So, how can the Minister ignore this Report? We, 49 Members of the Standing Committee, discussed this issue and took a unanimous view on this aspect. So, I would request that the Standing Committee's recommendation should be incorporated in the Bill at least in a future amendment, if not today. After all, this is the Report of a Parliamentary Committee. Our senior Member Shri Somnath Chatterjee knows that when a Standing Committee recommends something, it has to be accepted by the Government as it is.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): They do not even read the Report. The Ministers do not read the Reports of Standing Committees.

SHRI P.H. PANDIAN (TIRUNELVELI): The Standing Committee is a Mini Parliament. We work through Committee System here because Parliament cannot always sit in Session. Therefore, I would urge that this unanimous view of the Members of the Standing Committee, which includes myself, should be accepted.

Then, I would try to elaborate the point raised by Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh. He has stated that clause 1 (3) says: "a person or persons for the time being holding the office of Governor of a State" According to the Constitution, there shall be a Governor for each State or one Governor can also look after another State, but there cannot be two Governors in one State. I think it is a clerical mistake. I would like the Minister to clarify this point. ...(*Interruptions*)

Sir, this Bill is meant for the development of the North-Eastern Region. So, why should the Governor be included as a member of the North-Eastern Council? The Governor is the overall constitutional head of a State. I would again like to quote from the Report of the Standing Committee. It says:

"In relation to the Chairmanship of the Council, the Committee endorsed the official amendment given notice by the Home Minister which provided that the Chairman of the Council has to be nominated by the President. In this regard, the Committee considered the suggestion that the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission or Union Home Minister or Minister for Development of the North-Eastern Region should be nominated as *ex-officio* Chairman of the Council."

It is not there. So, kindly explain that.

Since you have brought forward the Bill for development, I am constrained to support it. You have not endorsed the views of the Standing Committee. I would say that it is not too late. You can still announce it. You can bring forward an amendment saying that MPs should also be included in the Council.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, much to Shri Somnath Chatterjee's disappointment, all Members, even as they have drawn attention to what they regard as things we should have done, they have supported the Bill. I am grateful, Sir.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : I am not disappointed. I have no hope from you. Therefore, why should I support it?

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: All Members have supported the Bill. For that reason, I am very grateful. I am also very grateful especially to the Members from the North-East for the kind words that they have said for the working of our Department and certainly for my own work in this regard.

Five or six points have been made. I will quickly reply to them. Then, I will - because all Members have supported it - get the Bill passed unanimously as was the case in the Rajya Sabha where Members of the Standing Committee were also present. The Chairman of the Standing Committee, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, also supported the Bill warmly in spite of the recommendations that you kindly read out.

Now, I will come to the general points. ...(*Interruptions*) When the matter comes up, towards the end, I will just say two or three words on development. Many Members, like Shri Sangtam, have intimate knowledge of the area with their itinerary experience in the field. They have made very important points. I will come to them in the end.

The first point that has been made is that security should be deleted. Shri Sangtam said this. Governors should not be included. I have already explained why we had led to the conclusion that the Governors should continue as they have done since Shrimati Gandhi set up the Council.

On the Chairmanship of the Council, it should be the Deputy Chairman or the Minister concerned.

Then, Shri Rajkumar Wangcha and others suggested that the authority for implementation and the executive power should be given to the Council. The Standing Committee had also said this for implementation of the project.

Finally, the MPs and Members and Chairmen of the Autonomous Councils should be included.

I shall deal with each point in just a minute or so. I shall give you the reasons which led us to contrary conclusions. I hope you would all agree on this. In many ways, it is correct that the North-Eastern Council has, thus far, not paid attention to its mandate on security. That is true. But the fact is that it should be paid attention. That was not dealt with at all from its focus on development. We are all agreed that its primary focus should be development. But in many ways, the security situation in the North-East today is much worse than it was in 1971. The reason is that, in many ways, the terrorists are better armed. As my distinguished and senior colleague, Shri Jaswant Singh, with his knowledge of Defence and External Affairs, knows, today, the external agencies are much more active in the North-East than they were in 1971.

The third reason is that inter-State coordination is very necessary in security matters. I will give you an instance. There are peace talks, as you know, with one faction of the NSCN. A cease-fire has been announced. It has been in effect through one-and-a-half years. What is the result? Two districts in Arunachal Pradesh have got affected because many of the persons, who were armed, have moved over to those two States. Therefore, the Chief Ministers themselves have been saying that we must pay more attention in the working of the North-Eastern Council to the security aspect. In the last meeting that was held on 14th of November, the distinguished Chief Minister of Tripura and other Chief Ministers said very emphatically: "We must now start discussing security in a coordinated way in this forum." For that reason, while the Standing Committee was completely right, I am sure that different considerations were from those who are on-the-spot and in charge of maintaining the law and order. When they are saying that there is no other forum for regional cooperation on this aspect of security, they have been pleading for this.

The President himself - I do not want to invoke his name but he has given a very good concept to the North-East - said that one economic zone, one security zone should be there. It is for that reason that we have requested that the word of security also continue in this regard.

The second point which was made very effectively and strongly was on the Chairmanship of the Council that the

Chairmanship should be with the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission or with the Minister concerned and so on. But actually, a person who is there on the spot is very necessary. I have seen that one of the most effective ingredients in reviving the Council has been that Gen. Sinha, posted there, has been able to devote his time frequently to the affairs of the North-East Council and thereby we have been able to resurrect him.

As you know, as many of you have been already in the Planning Commission, the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission is so involved in all the States that the attention that the North-East deserves would become less if we were to burden him with yet another responsibility which is to be exercised actually from Shillong. The Headquarters of the North-East Council being in Shillong and the Deputy-Chairman being in Delhi, files travelling here even for postings and so on will become a great problem. In this matter, the Bill provided the original thing that the President shall nominate the Chairman and as you see from the Standing Committee's Report, it considered the matter and said that it comes to the view that this discretion should be left to the President, even though certain Members and others have said that it should be the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission or somebody else.

SHRI K.A. SANGTAM (NAGALAND): May I just put it to you? We do not contest the competency of Gen. Sinha or any Governor in this matter. What we are trying to say is, by having the chairmanship with the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission, it makes things easier and faster because the time factor is very important for any development in the North-East. That is why we said that the Governor or anybody else should be there. I am not challenging the competency of the Governor. He is very efficient in the best of his ability. So, I think, we should not make a mistake. To make the process smoother and faster, the name of the Deputy-Chairman, Planning Commission has been requested for.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I entirely agree with the hon. Member. Our common objective is to expedite implementation and decision making. But the remedy for that probably lies in our expediting the procedure than in one person being the chairman of the North-East Council rather than another.

I will give you an instance. In the work, since this Department is created, I can assure you that we have cut down the time taken for approvals. As all the Chief Ministers will report to you, we just go from Ministry to Ministry as the advocates of the North-East and get clearances. I can say this with great pride that your Chief Ministers today appreciate this work that there is not a project which is loitering around among different Ministries in Delhi. Our benefactor, the Finance Minister, in the First Supplementary Grants, gave us Rs.200 crore for the non-lapsable pool and within one week of the money being available, it was all not just sanctioned but disbursed to the North-Eastern States because we have already obtained all the approvals and got the clearances from the Planning Commission and from different Ministries.

I, therefore, share with you the anxiety that we must get clearances made more expeditiously, but the remedy, as I suggested, was not in appointing one person rather than the other as the chairperson. That is why, the Standing Committee said, "in relation to the chairmanship of the Council, the Committee endorsed the official amendment given notice of by the hon. Home Minister, which provided that the Chairman of the Council was to be nominated by the President. In this regard, the Committee considered the suggestion that Deputy-Chairman, Planning Commission or Union Finance Minister or Union Home Minister or Union Minister for North-Eastern Region should be nominated as the ex-officio Chairman of the Council. The Committee was of the considered view that the nomination of the Chairman of the Council should also be left to the wisdom and discretion of the President."

So, that flexibility has been given. If the President so feels that at a particular time the Planning Commission should be given that responsibility, that would certainly be an important point.

The third point that was made by distinguished Members from that region and also others was that the executive powers should be given to the North-East Council for implementation. As I read out to you the passage from Shrimati Gandhi's inaugural address to the Council, I would say that the kinds of projects that are being taken up are diverse.

Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh was very correctly saying that it has unlimited potential for hydro electric power. In Mizoram alone, probably 25,000 MW potential is there. It is a regret that only 1.5 per cent of that potential is being utilised. I completely agree with him. I will come to that in the end.

Now, we are giving loans for civil aviation from the North-East Council. ...(*Interruptions*) I am only on the North-East Council as yet. There is allocation for power, roads, railways and various such things.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : You should give allocation for telecommunication also.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Yes, that is important. For all these things that are being given allocation, you cannot build up the requisite implementation capacity and expertise in one body called the North-East Council. You will then be duplicating the work. Power project has to be taken if the executive or the implementation responsibility is to be

given to the North-East Council. The North-Eastern Power Corporation is then set up for this purpose. The National Hydel Corporation is better equipped. It has the specialisation for executing those projects. All that expertise would have to be transferred into this Council. For that reason, it should remain as it is, and it should work through the best possible implementation agencies.

Many Members today mentioned about roads and telecommunications. Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev was also saying this. The Member from Mizoram was just telling us about the importance of roads and linking the district headquarters with the State capital and the difficult terrain. That work is being done under very difficult circumstances today by the Border Roads Organisation. Now, that means that expertise should also be brought into the North-East Council. It will become very difficult indeed.

SHRI K.A. SANGTAM : There is one problem. There is the dream project of the Prime Minister for giving road connectivity to North, South, East and West. It is called the Golden Quadrilateral. Why is this going only up to Silchar and not to all the other States? This should reach all the North-East States. You are only reaching Silchar, and the matter ends there. But they have recognised eight States now. Even Sikkim needs this. Arunachal Pradesh also needs this. Nagaland also needs this. Mizoram also needs this. All these States need this. Manipur also needs this. So, you have not been able to reach all the States. I think you should work out a package.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I give you my words that even if it is not a part of that single project, we will do something else. A very good proposal had come from one of the hon. Members....(*Interruptions*) Can I just finish in two minutes?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is not yielding.

SHRI SANSUMA KHUNGGUR BWISWMUTHIARY : Why not a single member is included in that Council?...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kindly conclude your speech.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I am coming to that.

SHRI SANSUMA KHUNGGUR BWISWMUTHIARY : The North-Eastern Council had never done anything for the backward and other tribal areas. What is the mechanism?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has not completed.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: I will come to that. There are many important points made, for instance, on linking the region. I had requested my colleagues and I will personally be working with the Department of Maj. Gen. (Retd.) B.C. Khanduri. This road is one part. It is one great artery, the East-West Highway on the Golden Quadrilateral. But there are many other things that need to be done, for instance, linking the States' capitals with the North-East region and then linking district headquarters with each State's capital. That network of roads needs to be developed. We will be having a Master Plan, I assure you, through the North-East Council or through the Planning Commission.

I am sure you would welcome the fact that we have now got a facility with the Planning Commission that for any North-Eastern State when they do not have the capacity to prepare their project, they only have to send a two-paragraph letter to the Planning Commission for preparing their project. We want this to be cleared. Please prepare a project. The Planning Commission, at its own cost, will prepare the project and then having prepared this project, they would take little time in clearing the same project itself.

In this way, similarly, on forests, I was told, when I took over this Department, that the Supreme Court judgement on use of forest-based industries had led to the stoppage of all development works in many of the North-Eastern States.

SHRIMATI SHYAMA SINGH (AURANGABAD, BIHAR): That was because of the murder in Bihar.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: It is also because of what had been found in Arunachal Pradesh where they had set up a sawmill. I myself studied the judgement. What happened was that the Supreme Court had actually not banned these wood-based industries. What they had done was this. They said, 'if you have a working plan for re-forestation, then you can go ahead.

We did work with the Ministry of Environment and Forests and got an allocation made especially for the North-East that the Centre would pay. Nagaland took the lead. They designated the areas in which they wanted work plans. The Centre prepared the work plans at its own cost and the whole work has now re-started in the States in which these initiatives were taken.

Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev spoke about air links. It has been a crying need there. I have found that there are more airstrips and aerodromes than airplanes in the North-East. For that reason, from the North-Eastern Council, we have given a subsidy of Rs.35 crore every year to the Indian Airlines so that four 50-seater planes could be hired as a taxi service, which would operate only in the North-East, going throughout the day between the capitals and other smaller towns like Silchar, within the North-East itself. ...(*Interruptions*)

DR. NITISH SENGUPTA (CONTAI): Vayudoot was supposed to be there. It was proposed by Shri Rajiv Gandhi. But the North-East people used to call it *yamdoot*.

SHRI K.A. SANGTAM : Actually, Shri Rajiv Gandhi had proposed that. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Hon. Minister, please do not give answers to all the interruptions.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: This service would start from the 25th December, 2002.

There are several other points that have been made but I have been directed to conclude. I do feel, we would continue this discussion some other day. I hope that all of us would raise our voice strongly for honest and strong implementation there. Secondly, I hope, all of us would raise our voice against violence. You would see that the kind of attention being paid to the North-East now has never been paid. This particular service that Shri Rajiv Gandhi had conceived of would start on Christmas Day, the 25th December, this year.

With these words, I commend that this Bill be passed.

SHRI P.H. PANDIAN (TIRUNELVELI): What about the inclusion of MPs in the North-Eastern Council, as recommended by the Committee on Home Affairs? There are hon. Members of Parliament even in District Development Councils.

SHRI SANSUMA KHUNGGUR BWISWMUTHIARY : What about my query?

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, I would answer that also. I did not answer that earlier just because the time was short. I can answer it in two minutes.

The question of inclusion of MPs is an important one. We had deliberated over it for a long time. Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh asked if there were sixteen members what was the difficulty in there being more members. If we have sixteen members as at present, plus eight MPs and three members nominated by the President, it would become a 27-member Council. As an executive body, it becomes very difficult for the body to function. We are trying to make it function more efficiently.

The second point is that the Chief Ministers themselves are also equally representative of the people. In many cases, because of the different parties to which MPs belong and to which the Chief Ministers belong, we would have other voices in the deliberations of the Council. This would become even more so, if we take up the point about the Chairmen of the Autonomous Councils being included. Then it would become a 36-member Council and it would become impossible and unruly. ...(*Interruptions*)

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : क्या केवल बड़ी कमेटी होने के भय से शामिल नहीं कर रहे हैं? (व्यवधान) गवर्नर को शामिल करने के पीछे क्या तर्क है, यह बताइए। (व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister, you need not answer that. I have not permitted him.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is :

"That the Bill further to amend the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The Motion was adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House will now take up clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is:

"That clauses 2 to 6 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clauses 2 to 6 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.
