

14.27 hrs.

Title: Introduction of the Refugee Relief Taxes (Abolition) Repeal Bill, 2002 (Bill passed.)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): Sir, on behalf of Shri Jaswant Singh, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to repeal the Refugee Relief Taxes (Abolition) Act, 1973, be taken into consideration."

MR. CHAIRMAN : Motion moved:

"That the Bill to repeal the Refugee Relief Taxes (Abolition) Act, 1973, be taken into consideration."

1427 hours

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (ULUBERIA): Sir, I know that it is a very simple amendment; it is just a repeal of the Bill.

In this context, I want to say that refugee relief taxes were imposed for the development of rehabilitation and to give relief to the refugees in the country.

But this task has not been completed fully, especially in the eastern part of the country. I want to draw the attention of the Government to the problems that the eastern part of the country is facing because after partition, huge number of people came to this side without anything. At least in the western part of the country, people had 'exchange of properties' etc. But in the eastern part, people came without anything, without even a single pie; they came fully as refugees. The Central Government took a discriminatory attitude, when they gave full rehabilitation for the western part of the country. So, the eastern part of the country was discriminated against and lakhs of people are still not fully rehabilitated. That is a serious problem for the eastern region.

The Government of West Bengal had also submitted a plan seeking sanction of Rs.500 crore for completion of the remaining rehabilitation work for the refugees in that part of the country. But that is pending with the Government.

Now, the Government is repealing that Bill. The Government thinks that there is no need to collect taxes to do that type of work. I also know that collection of such taxes in other cases was abolished. In this context, I will request the Government to consider it and see that those people who are in lakhs, who still have no houses, no jobs and who are not fully rehabilitated, are fully rehabilitated. The Government may have a re-look in the matter and prepare proper schemes. The Government should also consider sympathetically the demand of the Government of West Bengal for sanction of Rs.500 crore for full rehabilitation of the refugees who came from the erstwhile Pakistan.

With these few words, I conclude.

SARDAR SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN (SANGRUR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of this august House that since 1947, there are 30,000 Sikh refugees in Jammu and Kashmir. They had come from Pak-occupied Kashmir. They have still not got the citizenship. They are State-less people who do not have the voting right. They do not have the ration card. They cannot own property in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian Government has repeatedly not signed the United Nations Convention on the status of refugees. I seek that the Government of India should sign this Convention.

There are still Tibetan refugees in India. So, I do not think there is a need to repeal this Act. Rather, this Act should be kept on the Statute Book till all the problems of the refugees are solved and all the Sikhs, who are State-less, be given Indian citizenship. Their case in Kashmir should be looked into.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (CALCUTTA SOUTH): Sir, I appreciate the concern regarding refugees, being raised by Shri Hannan Mollah and others. Sir, you will appreciate that refugees came to India from either Pakistan or Bangladesh. Especially, in the eastern part of the country, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and north-eastern regions, the refugees have come from Bangladesh. According to an agreement between Shrimati Indira Gandhi and Mujibur Rahman and also between Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Liyakath Ali Khan, those refugees who have come to India before March 1971 are considered as Indian citizens.

The main problem is, there are a number of colonies which have not yet received the freehold right. The Government of India had accepted it in principle and sanctioned money also for it, yet all the colonies have not been regularised. Secondly, because of political and other reasons, the refugees are not getting proper rehabilitation. I can tell you that there are a number of colonies which have not yet received the freehold right. We

used to have Refugee Rehabilitation Corporation but that has also been closed. I know, Government did a number of things for the refugees. It is also a fact that these refugees came to our country empty handed under special circumstances. So, we should consider their problem seriously. More taxes should not be imposed on them. They should get tax relief.

I would request the Minister to find out from the State Governments the number of refugee colonies that are there and out of those, how many have been regularised and how many have got the freehold right? If they have not got the freehold right, what is the reason behind it? Will the Minister take up the matter with the State Governments and let us know the latest position?

With these words I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): Sir, the hon. Members have expressed their feeling while speaking on this Repeal Bill. We have already enacted various Acts for giving relief to the refugees. The hon. Members, Kumari Mamata Banerjee, and others who have participated in the debate have given some suggestions. We have noted all those points and in due course, we will consider them carefully. As regards other matters relating to refugees, we will deal with them separately.

I am thankful to the hon. Members who have participated in the discussion. Now, I would request the House to kindly pass this Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is:

"That the Bill to repeal the Refugee Relief Taxes (Abolition) Act, 1973, be taken into consideration. "

The motion was adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the House will take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is:

"That clause 2 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

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

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN: You both the Ministers are sharing the responsibility!

The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.
