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13.18 hrs

Title: Discussion on the National Waterway (Lakhipur-Bhanga Stretch of the Barak River) Bill, 2007.

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): I beg to move:\*

"That the Bill to provide for the declaration of the Lakhipur-Bhanga Stretch of the Barak river to be a national waterway and also to provide for the regulation and development of the said Stretch of that river for the purposes of shipping and navigation on the said waterway and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be taken into consideration."

\* With your permission, I would like to express my views while moving the Bill namely 'National Waterway (Lakhipur-Bhanga stretch of Barak River) Bill, 2007 for consideration and passing of the same. From time immemorial, inland water transport has served as a cheap and economic means of transport in India. With the advent of faster means of transport, i.e., rail, road and air, inland water transport got neglected.

Inland water transport has, however, maintained its edge over the other modes of transport in certain areas where it enjoys natural advantages.

Today, it is recognised all over the world for its inherent advantages of being the cheapest mode of transport for bulk haulage over long distance between places situated along the waterfront. Its energy efficiency, low pollution and potential for employment generation are universally accepted.

The Government is seized of the need for developing inland water transport infrastructure to restore its rightful place in the overall transport scenario of the country.

The subject of inland water transport finds place in all the three Lists of the 7<sup>th</sup> Schedule to the Constitution of India. The role of the Union is, however, limited to regulating shipping and navigation on the National Waterways declared, as such, by the Parliament. The responsibility and executive authority for development and maintenance of all waterways other than those declared as National Waterways rest with the State Governments.

Keeping in view the slow pace of the development of inland water transport in our country, several Committees were constituted by the Government of India, which have recommended declaration of important inland waterways as National Waterways. This august House has already enacted five Acts and declared the following inland waterways as National Waterways:-

- â€¢ Allahabad-Haldia stretch (1,620 kms) of the Ganga- Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system as National Waterway No.1;
- â€¢ Sadiya-Dhubri stretch (891 kms) of Brahmaputra river as National Waterway No.2;
- â€¢ Kottappuram-Kollam stretch of West Coast Canal along with Champakkara canal and Udyogamandal canal (205 kms) as National Waterway No.3;
- â€¢ Kakinada-Puducherry stretch of Canals and the Kaluvelly Tank, Bhadrachalam-Rajahmundry stretch of River Godavari and Wazirabad-Vijayawada stretch of River Krishna (1,095 kms) as National Waterway No.4; and
- â€¢ Talcher-Dhamra stretch of Rivers, Geonkhali-Charbatia stretch of East Coast Canal, Charbatia-Dhamra stretch of Matai River and Mahanadi Delta Rivers (623 kms) as National Waterway No.5.

The Government of India has constituted the Inland Waterways Authority of India in 1986 for development, maintenance and regulation of National Waterways for shipping and navigation. The infrastructure facilities on the first three National Waterways are being created by it to make them fully functional. The Authority is also gearing up to develop infrastructural facilities on the remaining two National Waterways which have been notified as National Waters in November 2008.

Most of the State Governments do not have resources to develop their waterways for shipping and navigation due to which most of the waterways other than National Waterways have remained neglected and unexploited for navigation.

Keeping in view the negligible share of inland water transport, which is less than 1%, it has become inevitable to give impetus to this mode of transport in the overall interest of the country. For this purpose, it is considered necessary to include more inland waterways which are to be declared as National Waterways.

Before a waterway can be considered for being declared as a National Waterway, it is essential to undertake techno-economic feasibility study including hydrographic survey and traffic studies of such waterways to assess the extent of improvement works required for their development and their financial implications.

Based on such a study and the potential of improvements in inland water transportation, for enhancing connectivity of the North-

Eastern Region of the country, it is now being proposed to declare the 'Lakhipur-Bhanga stretch of Barak River (121 kms) as a National Waterway.

I would like to mention here that development of this waterway with required inland water transport infrastructure is essential for providing improved connectivity of the southern part of the North-Eastern Region with the rest of the country as waterway in Bangladesh connecting Barak River with Haldia and Kolkata Ports are already a part of Indo-Bangladesh Protocol.

I would like to apprise this august House that the Bill for declaration of this Waterway was introduced in this august House on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2007 and subsequently referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture for examination and report. The Parliamentary Standing Committee submitted its 130<sup>th</sup> Report on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008, duly recommending that the Bill be passed with formal amendments and updated Financial Memorandum be appended to it. The revised Financial Memorandum has since been appended to the Bill.

With these words, Sir, I now move the motion that the 'National Waterway (Lakhipur-Bhanga stretch of Barak River) Bill, 2007, be taken up for consideration. \*\*

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill to provide for the declaration of the Lakhipur-Bhanga Stretch of the Barak river to be a national waterway and also to provide for the regulation and development of the said Stretch of that river for the purposes of shipping and navigation on the said waterway and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be taken into consideration"

SHRI LALIT MOHAN SUKLABAIYA (KARIMGANJ): Sir, I stand to support the National Waterway (Lakhipur-Bhanga Stretch of the Barak River) Bill, 2007.

Sir, it has been a longstanding demand of the people of Barak Valley to establish the water transport system in the valley which existed earlier. We had the water transport system from Kolkata-Karimganj-Bhanga-Badarpur-Lakhipur and for the last many years, it has been abandoned. Now, this declaration of national waterway within the Indian territory of Barak Valley, that is, from Lakhipur to Bhanga is a significant step because after declaration this stretch will get better infrastructure facilities for safe and sustained navigation. This water transport has its own advantage also because it is a low cost one, it is energy efficient and it is eco-friendly. This can also generate employment for the poor people in large number.

This stretch will be developed by the Government of India and with this, Karimganj will be linked and from Karimganj to Kolkata, there is a route existing. So, after development of this route, we will get a link upto Kolkata and we can have our goods transported from Kolkata to Barak Valley, from Lakhipur on Barak River which originates in Manipur wherefrom we have water line upto Myanmar.

So, one day we hope that we will have a link through this waterways to Myanmar. If we can develop this, there will be scope for international trade and commerce. Mizoram, Barak Valley and Tripura will be flourishing and this area will be developed. After the establishment of this water transport, the mechanised ships will be moving through the river. The movement of ships will prevent silting of river. As there was no such movement of ships, rivers have lost their depth and the depth of the rivers got reduced, thereby reducing the water carrying capacity of the rivers. It resulted in devastating flood in our area and in neighbouring States. So, after its introduction, the flood problem will also be reduced, at least its intensity will be reduced. So, I hope that this Bill will help us to develop our Valley and to develop Tripura and Mizoram.

We had a very nice water system – I already told that – from Kolkata to Karimganj and Karimganj to Bodarpur to Silchar. I request the hon. Minister that when this will be effected, after passing of the Bill, to develop that stretch from Karimganj, to develop infrastructure which we have demanded many times. Though it is in existence, it is not developed. In lean season, there no steamer can move. So, there is a need for infrastructure facility for dredging. I hope that will also be done. In fact, this will help us greatly..

I support the Bill whole-heartedly as this will help our people by fulfilling our unasked demand.

SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY (PURI): Hon. Chairman, Sir, this is a good Bill and I am supporting the Bill. This Bill intends to provide for the declaration of the Lakhipur-Bhanga stretch of the Barak river to be a national waterway and also to provide for the regulation and development of the said stretch of that river for the purposes of shipping and navigation on the said waterway and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This inland water transportation which has trailed other modes of transportation all these years is set to emerge as an important mode

of inland cargo movement and the water route will be used for navigation and shipping. In the past, because of this water route, India was occupying a very prestigious position in the international trade. Today also, in the era of global market economy, waterway stands as the most economical from the commercial point of view.

I would like to bring some points to the attention of the hon. Minister. This route was not the original route. Following an objection from the Ministry of External Affairs, the outer boundary of the Sixth National Waterway in the Lakhimpur-Bhanga stretch of the Barak River has been cut short at Bhanga. The original proposal was to stretch the boundary upto Karimganj and Laffasil, the boundary of India and Bangladesh. This was the original proposal.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Surface Transport and Shipping, while looking into this Bill, the National Waterway (Lakhimpur-Bhanga Stretch of the Barak River) Bill, 2007 has suggested that this national waterway No. 6 be developed into an international waterway.[\[MSOffice32\]](#)

This could be an international waterway. This is the suggestion of the Standing Committee which is looking after this Bill. As it is between India and Bangladesh, they should have discussed it with Bangladesh and they should make it an international route.

Sir, this route will pass through the Indo-Bangladesh protocol routes. The Standing Committee also recommended that security concerns should not be compromised during this process. It is also needed that the Ministry of Shipping should take up the matter of stepping up the security arrangements because this will go through the international border with Bangladesh. So, it is needed that we should make necessary arrangements for security purposes. The Government should make the security arrangements in the Sundarbans –protocol routes. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has done so before going ahead with this project.

Sir, the Border Security Force (BSF) should be entrusted with the job to keep a vigil on illegal migrants and movement of illegal commodities and unauthorised goods at all check points because this route will pass through Bangladesh. So, I would like to know whether the Government has made necessary arrangements in all the check points to see the security matters because the unauthorised goods and migrants will go through this route.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, first of all, I would like to thank both the hon. Members – Shri Braja Kishore Tripathy as well as Shri Lalit Mohan Suklabaidya – for having deliberated for the cause of this inland waterway which is going to be established between Lakhimpur and Bhanga in Assam.

Sir, I would only say, as everybody has said, it is a low-cost transport, energy-efficient and eco-friendly transport which has to be encouraged and developed wherever it is possible and necessary. This waterway pertains to the length of 121 km. and the cost will be around Rs. 91.5 crore. Fairway development and navigational aids would cost around Rs. 55.5 crore and terminals will be developed around Rs. 34.5 crore, and administrative expenditure will be around Rs. 1.5 crore. Sir, within three years, the entire development will be fulfilled. During the first year, we estimate that the traffic will be to the tune of 6.34 lakh tonnes; during the fifth year, it will be around 8.62 lakh tonnes; and during the tenth year, it will be around 10.53 lakh tonnes. It is mainly envisaged to transport coal, tea, food grains, bamboo, paper, timber, sugar, salt, cement, edible oils, pulses, petroleum oil and lubricants.

So, taking advantage of availability of all these materials, the transporters will definitely make use of this opportunity to develop this particular waterway for multi-fold profits.

Sir, as you all know, previously a lot of waterways have been nationalised. As far as the UPA Government is concerned, it has declared Waterways No. 4 and 5 and so on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2008. Inland Vessel (Amendment) Act has been passed in the Parliament in 2007. A new Central sector scheme for development of IWT sector in the North-Eastern region has been introduced. Revised Action Plan has been prepared for making the National Waterways NW-1, NW-2 and NW-3 fully operational by 2010 at a cost of Rs. 961.64 crore.[\[a33\]](#)

[\[R34\]](#)

Seven terminals on NW-3 at a cost of Rs.10.32 crore have been commissioned. Low level jetty capable of handling containers was constructed at Patna on NW-1 and a high level jetty under construction is an ongoing project. Low level jetty at Pandu (Guwahati) on NW-2 has been completed and a high level jetty is under construction. Night navigation facilities system was installed in about 364 km. in NW-1, 460 km. in NW-2 and 205 km. in NW-3. Project for providing state-of-art 24 hours navigational aids on the three NWS was sanctioned and implemented. Approval for setting up 6 Joint Venture Projects has been through. Acquisition of 6 cutter suction dredgers, 6 work boats and 6 accommodation boats for carrying out dredging operation in NW-1 and NW-2 was made and

sanctioned, and orders were placed for their construction. Two cutter suction dredgers and 2 work boats for NW-3 are under construction and the work is going on. So, these are the developments, I think, that have taken place during the UPA Government.

Now, I come to some of the things which our hon. friends highlighted. Shri Shri Lalit Mohan Shuklavidya has said about the link with Myanmar through Kaladan River. He is worried about the link with Myanmar through the Kaladan River. It is being developed by the Indian Government. It will be ready within five years. Next, he is worried about dredging. Dredging is included in Fairway Development at a cost of Rs.55 crore.

Shri Tripathy has highlighted some of the points. He has said about the new National Waterway and the connectivity. The new National Waterway provides for connectivity to Kolkata and Haldia through Bangladesh for which protocol already exists. The Border Security Force is maintaining the vigilance already at the international borders. There is no worry about security at this point. Customs post is already available. So, these are the things which I want to highlight.

With these words, I would request all the hon. Members to support it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill to provide for the declaration of the Lakhipur-Bhanga Stretch of the Barak river to be a national waterway and also to provide for the regulation and development of the said Stretch of that river for the purposes of shipping and navigation on the said waterway and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, 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 and 3 stand part of the Bill."

*The motion was adopted.*

*Clauses 2 and 3 were added to the Bill.*

*The Schedule was added to the Bill.*

#### **Clause 1** Short Title and commencement

Amendment made

Page 1, line 4, --

for "2007", substitute "2009". (2)

(Shri T.R. Baalu)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That clause 1, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

*The motion was adopted.*

*Clause 1, as amended, was added to the Bill.*

#### Enacting Formula

*Amendment made:*

Page 1, line 1,--

for "Fifty-eighth", substitute "Sixtieth". (1)

(Shri T.R. Baalu)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Enacting Formula, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

*The motion was adopted.*

*The Enacting Formula, as amended, was added to the Bill. [\[R35\]](#)*

*The Long Title was added to the Bill.*

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

*The motion was adopted.*

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