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Title: Regarding status of Assam Oil Division and need to instruct Indian Oil Corporation to restore the status quo-ante..

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL (DIBRUGARH): Sir, as you know, the Digboi Refinery is the world's oldest refinery, which is located in Tinsukia district. On 14 October 1981, the Government of India took over the shares of the Burmah Oil Company in Oil India and Assam Oil Company Limited. In turn, the Union Cabinet took a decision to vest its shares in the Assam Oil Company with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), but gave written instruction that its separate identity and logo should be maintained. Thereby, a separate Division, namely, the Assam Oil Division was created in IOC.

You will appreciate that while giving this instruction the Union Cabinet took into consideration the historical legacy of Assam Oil Company Limited as well as the sentiments of the people of the North-East. The birth of the Indian Oil Industry took place in Digboi, which still has the world's oldest refinery operating for over hundred years. The Assam oil brand and logo has proved to be much more than a dependable marketing support. Brand Assam Oil represented by the silhouette of the charging Rhino symbolizes the pride and aspirations of all people and cultures that are native to the North-East. Since the first oil-well was dug in Digboi more than 100 years ago, a strong legacy of emotional bonding has

* Not recorded.

resulted among different areas and people of the region. Indeed, the entire North-East regards Assam Oil as a heritage institution.

We, now, understand that on the pretext of controlling costs and achieving synergy, IOC is trying to merge and eliminate the separate identity of the Assam Oil Division.

MR. SPEAKER: It cannot be a big statement. What is happening these days?

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : The purpose of controlling cost could still be achieved by merging IOC's Marketing Division in the North-East with the Assam Oil Division, which is much larger in that area and continuing with the Marketing Headquarters at Digboi for whole of the North East with the same reporting relationship as existed prior to the implementation of IOC's new structure.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, we have to edit these statements. It cannot be allowed. It cannot be a two-page statement.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : In this day and age, when we talk of global villages, there can be no disadvantage in having IOC's Marketing Headquarters for the North-East in Digboi. Sir, I am coming to the last point.

MR. SPEAKER: The last point cannot be the 20th point.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : Sir, you will definitely appreciate that the balance sheet of National Integration is far more important than the balance sheet of a Public Sector Company like the Indian Oil Corporation.

I appeal, through you, to the hon. Minister of Petroleum to instruct Indian Oil Corporation to restore the *status quo-ante*. If the controlling cost is so important, then merge its Marketing Division in the North-East with the Assam Oil Division under the emblem of the charging Rhino. Thank you, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: In future, I would not allow statements to be read during this time. It cannot be a two-page statement.

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DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Sir, I would like to associate with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, your name will be associated with it.