

Title: Raised a discussion regarding situation in North Eastern Region due to insurgency. (Not concluded)

16.49 hrs.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA (GUWAHATI): Sir, whenever a discussion on the North-East comes up in this House, we have to either shout or bring our heart out. Otherwise, we are derailed somewhere. I hope, Sir, that this discussion will get its due seriousness from both the Benches as well as from the Ministry.

This discussion is warranted because of the present situation prevailing in North-Eastern region of this country and it will be more fruitful and will project the true picture of the situation, if we go by the Government statistics that have been given of the terrorist and extremist attacks in that region.

In one year alone, that is, in the past year, 1997 the number of extremist and terrorist attacks were as follows: -

Assam 427

Manipur 415

Nagaland 380

Tripura 303

Meghalaya 9

Arunachal Pradesh 27

We can see that even in Meghalaya which used to be a very peaceful State, the number of extremist attacks went up to 9.

The number of persons killed during this period, 1997 as was given by the Government itself, are as follows: -

Civilians Security forces

Assam 758 244

Tripura 554 115

Nagaland 316 111

Mizoram 4 --

Manipur 533 240

Arunachal Pradesh 8 --

This shows the tense situation prevailing in the North-Eastern region. The whole of North-Eastern region has 4,500 kms of international border with countries like China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh, as against that, only 42 kms are with the rest of India.

If we see the present situation, a number of insurgent groups are working in Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur and Mizoram, and they have almost entered into every State which used to be very peaceful at some point of time. If we see the history of insurgency, it started in Nagaland as early as 1953 and in Mizoram as early as in 1966.

The subject of how such a serious situation developed in the North-Eastern region is a matter of discussion which had taken place at different forums as well as in this House.

Earlier, the whole of the North-Eastern region formed one single State and that was the undivided Assam. If we analyse the situation and try to find out where we are lagging behind, why this insurgency had taken place, and why these extremist movements are there, we will see that it is because of the feeling of alienation, the feeling of being swarmed by people from outside the area and also due to economic backwardness which is the most important problem.

To consider the economic backwardness, several Committees have been formed. But if we see the progress of the implementation of the recommendations of those Committees, the responses are very very lukewarm. If we consider the field of agriculture, this area is basically an agrarian area. But even after so many years of our planned development, agriculture has not developed the way it should have been developed or as it has been developed in other parts of the country. If we see the picture of industrialisation of the region, we are lagging behind all the other States of the country. The region has about 166 large and medium industries and a few thousand small-scale units, 50 per cent of which are sick. If we see the infrastructure facilities, you can realise the position only if you visit those areas. If we see the power situation, Roads and the railway network, the lack of development of these infrastructure facilities has become the main hindrance for the development of the entire region.

We discussed insurgency many times. If we are to discuss the insurgency problem, we cannot discuss insurgency minus development because economic development is the main issue which is connected with the insurgency movement. Somewhere, we have reached a vicious circle. We say that there is no development and that is why there is insurgency. The other way of saying is because there is insurgency, there is no development. So, we have to come out of this vicious circle and think in a new way as development is the answer to tackle the insurgency problem.

The insurgency groups are mainly youths and students. Why is it so? The youths and the students have taken to this way of life. Why have they gone to take to that path? If you see the unemployment problem in that part of the country, there is rampant unemployment of the young people. The lack of job opportunities and the lack of technical and other educational facilities have contributed to the growing number of unemployed youths every year. It is not only that. From time to time, a number of Committees have been appointed. From time to time, a number of Prime Ministers have visited that area. A number of packages have been announced. We welcome those announcements. Our former Prime Minister Shri H.D. Deve Gowda announced an economic package of Rs.6,100 crore.

17.00 hrs.

Subsequently, our former Prime Minister Shri Gujral had announced a package of Rs.112 crore for infrastructure development. But I am sorry to say that a little has been done to implement those packages. Even the present Prime Minister, hon. Shri Vajpayee, had also announced a package at the time of Bihu Festival in the month of April. Subsequently, a Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri S.P. Shukla, Member, Planning Commission was appointed. The Committee had given its Report. The Report had suggested ten per cent deduction from the Central Budget for the development of the North-Eastern region. I am sure, that the present Government would take immediate steps to implement those recommendations.

I hope, that the Government is aware of the requirements for the infrastructure development of the region to bring it on par with the rest of the country. One single most important point is, how to bring these insurgent groups to the negotiating table. We have seen the newspaper reports about the announcements made from time to time by the Home Minister and by some other Ministers saying that they have established contacts with the insurgent groups to bring them to the negotiating table. Now, we want to know as to what is the progress made in this regard. We firmly believe that a pact or a secret pact cannot solve the insurgent problem in the North-Eastern region. Now is the time for the Government to come out with a definite agenda to negotiate with the insurgent groups. The agenda should not be a secret one, but the agenda should be known to the country and to this House. I want to know what progress has been made in bringing them to the negotiating table.

The Defence Minister had announced on the 5th of April that the Central Government had taken certain measures by which the insurgent groups would shortly come to the negotiating table. For that purpose, a cease-

fire has been declared between the Central Government and the underground organisations in Nagaland. Later on, we also saw the newspaper reports about the appointment of an emissary to negotiate with the insurgent groups in Nagaland. I want to know what is the progress in that regard.

Sir, as I have said, the main issue before us today is 'development'. Minus economic development, I do not think that insurgency can end. So, it is my humble submission before the Government. As a right of Member of this august House, I want to know as to what action the Government is taking in dealing with this situation in the North-East.

To my mind, if we go by only one way, I do not think, we will get good results. We have to take two lines together at a time -- the 'development' as well as 'negotiations with the insurgent groups.' If we proceed parallelly, I think, we can reach our goal. So, we want a categorical response from the Government in this regard. With these words, I conclude.

">SHRI SAMAR CHOUDHURY (TRIPURA WEST): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the situation in the North-Eastern region due to insurgency is getting to a serious deterioration. The ethnic conflicts often become violent and it is increasing to help the ethnic division more gravely with the incidents of insurgency attacks and threats.

In the national daily The Hindu of 26th July, 1998 it has been reported and I quote:

"Seven Santhals were gunned down and 21 injured when a group of NDFB militants entered the Tilapara Relief Camp at Chharalikhola village under Kokrajhar P.S. of Assam and started firing indiscriminately on 24th July, 1998. The dead included a Two-and-a-half years girl, three boys aged 7, 10 and 14, and a 55 years old woman."

The report tells that the ethnic cauldron continues to boil in the trouble torn Kokrajhar district. After the incident, the police and CRPF party came under heavy sniper fire, next noon from the NDFB militants and they could escape, fled away inside jungle.

The reports on incidents of insurgency and counter-insurgency are generally not much different from others, as recently occurred in different parts of the region.

Sir, this is the development after 50 years of our Independence that such genocide carried out against a minority ethnic group! It is a recent phenomenon, and now, it has become a regular phenomenon in the North-Eastern region.

It is the information from different sources that after the ethnic clashes in 1996 which had killed over 200 tribals, the santhals in that locality formed their own armed group. The ethnic relations strained between Bodos and the others. The Santhals were working in the tea garden areas since more than 100 years in search of jobs, new families migrate often to Kokrajhar villages. Besides the Santhals, other minority groups like Nepalis, Koch, Rajbongshi and religious minority Muslims come from different regions for settlement. All the minorities are threatened and have started migrating again to parts of West Bengal.

The tension aggravates the situation. Almost all land and rail connections to the North-East region run through the Bodo dominated areas. As has happened in the past, if the violence in Kokrajhar goes unchecked, they can block the routes. The issue of major security is linked to the communication and development of the entire region.

Excepting only the two States, Assam and Tripura, the rest of the States in the region are dominated by tribal people. Tripura was once a tribal majority State. It was also one of the princely States before Independence. It has turned to a change with an adverse ethnic relation position of thirty per cent tribal minority. The ethnic problem in this State has become the central issue of all political and economic activities and also social services. Militant groups with their separatist policies and their insurgency activities were reportedly mainly concentrated in Tripura, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. But recently, we are getting information and reports from different sources that in Meghalaya the members of the underground outfits like the ULFA, the RYKL, the BLTF, the NSCN and the ANVC have sneaked in from Bangladesh and set up their militant camps in areas lying

between the Bangladesh border and South Mongston in Sonapahar, Shillong and Rangeng Road. The Government of Meghalaya is aware of this.

The whole North-Eastern region is now a beehive of some seventy highly motivated insurgent organisations which have pinned down about two lakhs of our military and paramilitary troops engaged in counter-intelligence, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. The Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence plays a commanding role in launching and supporting the anti-India terrorist groups whose aim is to destabilise and weaken this country.

The preponderating issue in the present day situation in the region is whether insurgent groups like the ULFA, the NSCN, etc. have lost their political ideology. They are still a medley of gun-wielding warlords who have been inspired by the ISI to strike terror. Money is no problem for them. For, they loot the banks or amass it by smuggling drugs cultivated in plenty in the golden triangle of Burma, Thailand and South China. They have easy access to the market of sophisticated modern weaponry. They are encouraged by the power monopolies of the world and the leaders of arms and weaponry.

The imperialist forces that are backing them are not onlookers.

Today, imperialism seeks to evolve a new international order politically, economically and militarily in order to strengthen their hegemony and perpetuate the system of intense exploitation. They have kept their intelligence organisations engaged. Secessionist demands are encouraged. Coordination meetings of different insurgency outfits outside India are reported. Independence Day, the 15th August, 1997 was boycotted unitedly by NSCN, ULFA, NLFT and others. They observed that day as black day with an open call against India. While South Asia has been in the midst of a crisis that threatened the society, the development models once pursued have served only to perpetuate poverty and give rise to conflicts and disparities. The danger to India should have to be assessed at the proper time and this is the time when the Central Government should not stop.

Tripura has 839 kilometres long porous international border with Bangladesh. It has not been sealed as yet. The NFLT has set up their militant camps across the borders at Zamtali, Ojanchali, Lalu, Nidenpara, Gilpal of Khagrechari District of Hill Chittagong within Bangladesh. Srimangal on the West of Tripura across the Indo-Bangladesh border is also a permanent hideout with their established camps. From there they are attacking Tripura. Tea gardens of Satchali, Nalua, Rema, Debrabali are being used for permanent training of militants inside Bangladesh across the border set up by the Tiger Force.

A good number of AK-47 and AK-56 rifles are being used by the extremists. It is learnt from different sources that sometimes they are holding more than hundred AK-47 and AK-56 rifles which they use against the common people in order to terrorise them. Those who oppose them, those who fight for national unity, integrity and sovereignty are being targeted. The leaders of the democratic movement are being targeted. NSCN, ULFA, PLA and all other outfits are now jointly operating from their camps. Recently, they have increased their attacks against the Ministers, MPs, MLAs and the Government officers. One Minister was killed. It was reported in the Parliament also. He was the Minister of Health. He was elected only recently, a few months back. The son of Bajuban Riyan, MP was kidnapped. It was also reported here. One MBBS doctor from the Sontibazar hospital was kidnapped. All of them are kept in captivity by the extremists. They could not be rescued. The Left Front Government in the State have taken all possible steps by counter-offensive operations against the insurgents.

A political offensive against the insurgents to isolate them from the common people has achieved a momentum. The Central Government was requested to deploy adequate armed force personnel and Assam Rifles to strengthen the counter insurgency for action under a timebound programme. But the Central Government did not take the proposal seriously, rather two battalions of Army had been withdrawn recently and after that the insurgency operations had gained momentum.

Sir, the policies of power-sharing arrangement based on ethnic group rights and the devolution of authority to lower levels of Government, proved to be most successful in containing the ethnic discord and violence. When there is ethnic tension, the Government should firmly stand for the protection of minorities. The Left Front

Government had achieved the confidence of the people in dealing with complicated ethnic relations in the State. Democracy in the State is now more strong with participation of weaker sections and backward classes.

Sir, the Tribal Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule of our Constitution has been firmly protected and strengthened with all help and assistance from the State Governments. The tribal groups demand for inner line permits within the area of Autonomous Council which was supported by the State Government had been sent to the Central Government for final decision which is still pending with them.

The Tripura Chief Minister has noted immediate help and assistance from the Central Government, and demanded a modest action and positive consideration from the Prime Minister. The 14-point demand are:

- i) the level of security forces needs urgent augmentation. There is need for more Army/units of Assam Rifles to tackle insurgency in the State;
- ii) there is need for a senior officer of the rank of Major-General of the Army to be stationed in Tripura to conduct anti-insurgency operation;
- iii) the border with Bangladesh needs to be manned by adequate strength of BSF. Presently available BSF is less than even the inadequate sanctioned strength;
- iv) immediate sanction and construction of border-fencing on Tripura-Bangladesh border by a Central agency;
- v) completion of border road along the Tripura-Bangladesh border;
- vi) effective action for closure of extremist camps in Bangladesh and stoppage of help given to Indian extremists there;
- vii) assistance to the State Government for modernisation of State Police specially with bullet proof vehicles, modern arms and other equipment;
- viii) assistance to the State for VIP security in the light of the recent killing of a Minister by insurgents and bullet proof cars may be provided;
- ix) free use of helicopter by the State Government for movement of forces in emergency as well as for travel by Ministers and officers in insurgency affected areas;
- x) reimbursement by the Central Government of security-related expenditure to the State Government as is done in the case of J&K, Punjab and Assam;
- xi) clearance of other proposals related to security pending with the Government of India;
- xii) Central assistance for resettlement of surrendered extremists;
- xiii) liberal Central assistance for economic development specially in tribal areas both in terms of infrastructure and basic minimum services and implementation of the recommendations of the Shukla Commission; and
- xiv) raising of an additional Assam Rifles Battalion for Tripura Range;

I would request the hon. Prime Minister, hon. Home Minister, and all the Members of the Central Cabinet to look into the problems of Tripura and the total North-East region with actual Swadeshi view which shall keep our integrity firm and not helping the extremists to increase their activities, keeping in view the economic and social developments of the area on the lines of good Centre-State relations.

">

श्री तपन सिकदर (दमदम): अध्यक्ष महोदय, उत्तर पूर्वी भारत की दुख भरी कहानी हम कई सालों से देख रहे हैं। इस सारे विषय को हमें दो हिस्सों में बांटना चाहिए। पहले, जो पहाड़ में रहने वाले, जंगल में रहने वाले लोग हैं, उनकी तरफ सरकार ने कोई ध्यान नहीं दिया, फिर एक-दो स्टेट ऐसे हैं जहां मैदान में रहने वाले और पहाड़ में रहने वाले लोगों के बीच काफी अंतर आ चुका था। अगर इस खाई को पिछले ५० साल में पूरा कर दिया, तो मुझे लगता है कि जो इंसरजेंसी हम देख रहे हैं, उसकी स्थिति इतनी भयानक न होती। पहले नागालैंड, मणिपुर और मिजोरम आदि स्टेट्स में अपनी सरकार की ओर से, प्रशासन की ओर से कुछ नहीं किया जाता था, जिसके कारण उनका एकमात्र सहारा मिशनरीज थे। मिशनरीज के द्वारा उस समय लोगों की जो सेवा की गई, उसके कारण मिशनरीज को बहुत पापुलैरिटी मिली लेकिन मिशनरीज को जनप्रियता का आधार बनाकर कई बाहरी तत्व इसके अंदर आ गये। बाहर के कई देश यह चाहते हैं कि उत्तर पूर्वी भारत को जैसे भी हो, अस्थिर बनाकर रखें, भारत सरकार के ऊपर दवाब बनाकर रखें? नार्थ ईस्टर्न स्टेट्स के अंदर कुछ स्टेट्स को भारत से अलग करने के लिए कई बार प्रयास हुआ, इस कारण मिशनरीज को भी बदनाम किया गया। मैंने कई सालों तक उत्तर पूर्वी भारत के राज्यों में प्रभारी के नाते काम किया है। इस नाते मैंने देखा है कि वास्तव में जो मिशनरीज थे, सर्विस ओरियंटिड मिशनरीज थे, वे ऐसे कामों के साथ जुड़े हुए नहीं हैं।

... (व्यवधान)

SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE (JORHAT): Sir, he is casting aspersions on the missionaries. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR : No, no; I think, you are committing a mistake. I am not condemning the missionaries. ... (Interruptions) I am not raising my voice against the missionaries.

मैंने कहा कि मिशनरीज के सेवा कार्य को माध्यम बनाकर कुछ घुसपैठ आ गये और वे यहां आकर ऐसे कामों के साथ जुड़ गये जैसा त्रिपुरा में दंगा हुआ था।

... (व्यवधान)

मैं उदाहरण देना चाहूंगा कि त्रिपुरा दंगे के समय जब हम वहां पहुंचे तो उस समय के चीफ मिनिस्टर श्री नृपेन चक्रवर्ती ने हमें खुद बताया कि इसके साथ मिशनरीज का एक अंश जुड़ा हुआ है।

... (व्यवधान)

मैं कह रहा था कि बहुत समय से पहाड़ में रहने वाले, जंगल में रहने वाले लोगों की जो अवहेलना की गई, उसके कारण वहां क्षोभ पैदा हुए। बाद में पोलिटिकल पार्टीज ने उस क्षोभ को काम में लिया। आज जो इंसरजेंसी है

Insurgency is the creation of political parties.

उसके प्रमाण भी हैं। मैं उदाहरण देना चाहूंगा। २ अप्रैल के कलकत्ता टैलीग्राफ में लिखा है -

"It is recognised that everyone in Tripura the Left Front and Congress have used tribal insurgents to distabilise the other. When the Leftists are in power the Congress used to instigate a group once known as the Tripura National Volunteer but since reformed as the..."

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Sikdar, you can continue on this subject tomorrow.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, from which document is he quoting?

SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR : This is from 'The Telegraph' ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Sikdar, please hear me. We have to take up the 'Half-an-Hour discussion now. You can continue on this subject tomorrow.

SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR : Sir, all right.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, the House will take up 'Half-an-Hour' discussion.