

Title: Combined discussion on Statutory resolution regarding disapproval of Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 (Ordinance No. 6 of 2017) and Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017 (Statutory Resolution-Negative and Government Bill -Passed).

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now, we are taking Item Nos. 22 and 23 together. Shri Premachandran to move the Statutory Resolution.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (KOLLAM): Sir, I beg to move the Statutory Resolution :

“That this House disapproves of the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 (Ordinance No.6 of 2017) promulgated by the President on 23 November, 2017.”

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES AND MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (DR. HARSH VARDHAN):
Sir, I beg to move :

“That the Bill further to amend the Indian Forest Act, 1927, be taken into consideration.”

सर, लगभग तीन साल पहले, जब मैं साइंस एंड टेक्नोलॉजी मिनिस्टर बना, तब मैंने अपनी साइंस की लेबोरेट्रीज का अध्ययन सबसे पहले नॉर्थ ईस्ट में जाकर करना शुरू किया। उस समय बैम्बू के संदर्भ में, जो बैम्बू के प्रोडक्ट्स हैं, चाहे वह फैब्रिक हो, फूड प्रोडक्ट्स हों या फर्नीचर हो या विभिन्न प्रकार की रिसर्च के दूसरे आउटकम्स हों, मैंने उनको अपनी सीएसआर की लैब्स में देखा। उस समय बैम्बू की इम्पोर्ट्स को मैंने उतना ही समझा था, जितना एक साइंटिस्ट की निगाह से उसे मैंने देखा था। लेकिन अभी कुछ समय पूर्व, जब मुझे एनवायरनमेंट मिनिस्टर बनने का मौका मिला और इस विभाग से जुड़े हुए कानूनों को गहराई से समझने का मौका मिला, तब ध्यान में आया कि आज जो अमेंडमेंट इंडियन फॉरेस्ट एक्ट, 1927 में करने का प्रयास किया गया है, जिसे आज पार्लियामेंट के सामने रखा गया है। जिसके लिए कैबिनेट ने एप्रूव करके एक ऑर्डिनेंस भी लागू किया। गहराई से अध्ययन करने पर मुझे बड़ा आश्चर्य हुआ कि इतने गहरे और गंभीर विषय, जिसकी देश को इतनी जबर्दस्त आवश्यकता थी, शायद अगर अनेक वर्षों पूर्व यह संशोधन हुआ होता तो देश की इकोनोमी को बहुत ज्यादा बूस्ट मिला होता। इंडियन फॉरेस्ट एक्ट में यह संशोधन करने के लिए इस देश को वर्ष 1927 से वर्ष 2017 तक, यानि 90 साल इंतजार करना पड़ा। हमारी नेशनल फॉरेस्ट पालिसी वर्ष 1988 में बनी थी और उसके अंदर बहुत सी बातें थीं, जैसे हम देश के अंदर अपना फॉरेस्ट कवर बढ़ाएं, ग्रीन कवर बढ़ाएं, ट्री कवर बढ़ाएं और अभी यह 24 प्रतिशत के आस-पास है, उसे बढ़ाकर हम 33 से 34 प्रतिशत तक लेकर जाएं। इसके संदर्भ में हम सभी ने संकल्प लिया था। मेरा सबसे पहले कहना है कि यह जो बिल है, हमारे देश में जो हमारा बहुत चिर-प्रतीक्षित लक्ष्य है, उसको कामयाब बनाने के अंदर इसकी बहुत महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका होने वाली है। मैं शुरूआत में केवल कुछ तथ्य आपके समक्ष रखना चाहता हूं और फिर सब लोगों की बात सुनने के बाद इस विषय पर और विस्तार से आपसे बातचीत करूंगा।

जो बैम्बू है, जिसके संदर्भ में यह आज का बिल है, अभी तक इंडियन फॉरेस्ट एक्ट 1927 के अंदर इस बैम्बू को परिभाषा के तहत ट्री की परिभाषा के अंदर रखा गया है जबकि साइंस के हिसाब से, टैक्सोनॉमी के हिसाब से यह ग्रास है। लेकिन 90 सालों तक यह ट्री की परिभाषा में रहा और उसके कारण सब प्रकार के सरकार के ऐसे

कंट्रोल सिस्टम्स जिसमें बैम्बू के कारण जो गरीब लोगों को, गरीब किसानों को, हमारे ट्राईबल्स को या इसके साथ जुड़े हुए व्यवसाय से जुड़ी हुई छोटी-छोटी इंडस्ट्रीज को जिस प्रकार का बूस्ट मिलना चाहिए था, उस बूस्ट से वे इसलिए वंचित रह गये क्योंकि ट्री की परिभाषा में रहने के कारण इसकी कटिंग के ऊपर, इसके ट्रिजिट के ऊपर इतने प्रकार के गहरे कानून लगते थे कि किसी के लिए भी व्यावहारिक तौर पर इस काम को पूरे प्रोत्साहन के साथ, पूरे उत्साह के साथ कर पाना व्यावहारिक तौर पर संभव नहीं था। इसी तरह से यह जो हमारा Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006 है, इसमें भी इसको परिभाषा के हिसाब से माइनर फॉरेस्ट प्रोड्यूस का नाम दिया गया है। हमारा यह कहना है कि किसी भी प्रोडक्ट का जो क्लासिफिकेशन है, वह टैक्सोनॉमी के हिसाब से, लीगली भी और सोशली भी एकदम कॉमन होना चाहिए और इसलिए अमेंडमेंट के माध्यम से जो हमारा इंडियन फॉरेस्ट एक्ट का सैक्शन 2 का सब सैक्शन 7 है, उसमें जो ट्री की परिभाषा है, उसमें से बैम्बू को हटाकर बैम्बू से जुड़े हुए सारे व्यवसाय को, व्यापार को फॉरेस्ट कवर के साथ जुड़े हुए पॉजीटिव मूवमेंट को देश के अंदर स्ट्रैथन करने की सरकार की मंशा है। इस मंशा के माध्यम से हम इस बैम्बू मिशन से जुड़े हुए हजारों-लाखों करोड़ों लोगों को बेहतरी का जीवन देना चाहते हैं।

Sir, bamboo has been recognised as an important source of natural wealth as early as 4th century BC by Kautilya and it has been documented in Artha Sastra. It was popularly known as green gold or poor man's timber. Recently it has been elevated to the status of timber of the 21st century. I feel so sorry why this poor man's timber has been given such a raw treatment for almost 90 years. But thanks to the dynamic and the pragmatic leadership of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi under whose guidance and inspiration we all work, we have now at least got to a position where we can think of something great happening on this front in this country.

Sir, just to place some facts before you and this august House I want to tell you that in terms of the area on which bamboo is grown in our country or for that matter anywhere in this world, we have the largest area in the whole world where bamboo is grown. And in terms of our genetic resource, we are second richest to China. China has something like 142 species of bamboo: we have something like 136 species of bamboo.

The total forest area in our country is 76.95 million hectares; only about 13.96 million hectares, that is about 18.14 per cent of it, are basically covered by bamboo. This is as per the 2011 report.

The production of bamboo in our country is 4.6 million tonnes but this is only fifty per cent of our requirement. Out of that, about 1.9 million tonnes are used by the pulp and paper industry which amounts to about 35 per cent. This is a very important industry.

I have the statistics of Madhya Pradesh where they say that one tonne of bamboo is equivalent to an income of Rs. 7,000. If we value this bamboo production outside the forest, it can further be increased after this amendment is passed by Parliament. At the moment it comes to about Rs. 71 billion. That is the potential; and that is what bamboo is, about which we are talking now.

One tonne of bamboo can give 350 mandays of employment to the country. Right now, 20 million workers or poor persons are involved somehow in bamboo-related activity.

I have to specifically mention about the North-East where I studied about bamboo in the science labs that it is a way of life for the people. I have seen some of the best furniture in some of my science labs produced from bamboo from the North-East. Out of 5.60 million hectares of land that we have in the North-East, 31.40 per cent is used for bamboo. This constitutes fifty per cent of the total stock of the whole country. It becomes important specifically for the North-East.

Bamboo is versatile and fast growing. Fifty per cent of it can be cut in three years. It acts as a big catalyst for the economy. If you start the intervention at the policy stage where we are starting today, going through the extraction, cutting stage, utilisation stage and further to the trading stage, it contributes to strengthen your household strategy and food security.

All of us know about handicrafts and various tools and implements like *hasua*, *khurpi*, *hal*, and *kudal*. I was just putting down a list of some of the important things that bamboo is actually giving to the society. I could draw a long list. I would just like to bring it to the notice of this House. I start from wood substitutes and composites including bamboo-based panels; bamboo flooring; bamboo boards; bamboo furniture; and incense sticks, where right now we see the *agarbattis* and such other things being imported from Vietnam which is unfortunate for us.

Apart from these, we have bamboo blinds, bamboo ply, veneers, strip boards composite with wood and jute. Then, even we have food products like bamboo shoots, vegetables, pickles and savour drinks. We have fodder like bamboo leaves. I am just completing this list. My friends are saying that I should talk about it later on. So, I will just complete this list and then, maybe continue with it after all of you have spoken. I just want to mention about the construction and the structural applications which include traditional houses, huts, bamboo frames with plastic and pre-fabricated houses, poles, paper mat, bamboo-based fibres, fabrics, fibres for yarns which are like anti-microbial and moist-absorbent. Fuel developing area is a new area where we use the bamboo charcoals. Then, we have bamboos for paper and pulp, fencing, scaffolding, handicrafts, utensils, baskets, mats, toys, wall hangers, pencils, decorative items, ropes, containers, agricultural implements, musical instruments, umbrella handles, fishing rods, screen wall plates, dulla fish baskets, pathi rain shields, poola, dala trays, pencil holders, lamp shades, table mates, decorative fans, door screens, tools, vegetable baskets, shopping bags and of course, traditional medicine also. This is a small list out of the many things that this bamboo is producing. I will continue with my statement later on. Sir, what I wanted to emphasise is that it was so essential to make everything pertaining to bamboo growth in the non-forest areas easy for the people of this country to involve them, to give them employment and money and to see that they can stand on their own feet. Then, of course, it is essential to ensure that we are able to produce so many products and we can deliver them not only in India but also abroad. I have another list of the bamboo products which are transported or exported to countries as developed as America, Australia, England and so many other countries. There is an another list.

Sir, I would request that this long awaited amendment to the Indian Forest Act, 1927 should be taken up in the right spirit by the hon. Members of the House. I am sure that whosoever will get into the depth of this issue, he will have a strong recommendation for passing it immediately and implementing it for the betterment of the countrymen.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (KOLLAM): Thank you very much, Sir. I was very eagerly listening to the advancement of arguments made by the hon. Minister who is a very nice gentleman and one of the close friends of ours.

16.24 hours (Shri Ramen Deka *in the Chair*)

A deliberate silence was there regarding the issuance of the Ordinance. We have moved the statutory Resolution disapproving the promulgation of the Ordinance. It is a well-established constitutional position that promulgation of Ordinance under Article 123 can be done only under extraordinary circumstances, when the House is not in Session. It is an independent legislation brought out by the Executive and the Ordinance should be issued only under the compelling circumstances.

Further, Article 123 does not speak about replacement of an Ordinance by an Act of Parliament. Sir, the Government is deliberately avoiding the supremacy of Parliament and the legislative process. There are so many judgements. I am not going to quote all those judgements including some recent judgements of the hon. Supreme Court that speaks against the Ordinance route to legislation.

Sir, the recent Supreme Court judgement in Krishna Kumar *versus* State of Bihar case, a seven-member Bench of the Supreme Court has held that re-promulgation of Ordinance is impermissible and termed it as a fraud on the Constitution. Though it is related to re-promulgation of the Ordinance, there are strong and stringent observations against the Ordinance route of legislation. In the same case, the Supreme Court further stated that the Constitution does not permit the President or the Governor as a parallel law-making authority independent of Legislature.

Now-a-days, the Governor and the President are becoming the parallel law-making authority by means of promulgating ordinances day-by-day. That is why, the Supreme Court in the year 2017 has categorically said that the Governor and the President of the country can never be assigned the right to have the legislative process. Legislative process is the full domain of the Legislature. It is within the purview of the legislature whether it is Parliament or the Legislature. I do agree that in certain extraordinary circumstances, in urgent necessity and in compelling circumstances, the Government is forced to promulgate an Ordinance. Such a provision is there under article 123.

Sir, let us now examine whether this Ordinance No.6 of 2017, *i.e.*, the Indian Forest Ordinance of 2017, will come within the purview of article 123 of the Constitution. This Ordinance was promulgated on 23rd November, 2017. I would like to specifically know from the hon. Minister what was the

urgency and exigency in promulgating this Ordinance on 23rd November, 2017. Secondly, what compelling circumstances or extraordinary situations were there so as to promulgate such an Ordinance? There are no compelling circumstances or necessities. So, there is a cloud of suspicion that it is to protect somebody's interest. Otherwise, why could the Government not wait for ten days as the Parliament was being summoned in the month of December, 2017?

Normally, during the third week of November, we used to have the Winter Session of Parliament. Unfortunately, this time the Winter Session of Parliament was delayed not because of Opposition's fault or the Members of this House but because of the Gujarat Elections, the Government wanted to avoid discussion in Parliament on political issues. The Government did not want to have such a debate in Parliament. Therefore, the Government postponed summoning of Winter Session to 15th December, 2017. On 14th December, Gujarat elections were held and on 15th December itself, they have summoned the Parliament Session. So, it is not the fault of the Members. So, the delay in summoning the Winter Session is also a fault on the part of the Government. So, I do allege that promulgation of this Ordinance is lacking *bona fides*. I seek a specific answer from the hon. Minister.

Once again I would like to seek a specific answer from the hon. Minister as to what is the urgency, what is the exigency and what is the compelling circumstance or what is the extraordinary situation prevailing so as to promulgate an Ordinance by which bamboo is taken out of the definition of tree under Indian Forest Act of 1927. Coming to the Bill, kindly see whether such an exigency was required for promulgating an Ordinance. The entire intention of the amendment to the Act is to omit bamboo from the purview of definition of tree in section 2 clause (7) of the Indian Forest Act of 1927. Now what is clause (7) of section 2? According to this clause, tree includes palms, bamboos, stumps, brush-wood and canes. Now kindly read clause 4 of section 2, sub-clause (i) regarding forest produce. The definition is that the forest produce includes trees, leaves, flowers, fruits and all other parts or produce of the trees.

Even the leaves of the trees, any produce of the trees will come under the purview of the definition of 'forest produce'. My suggestion is that we should read clause 2(vii) and 2(iv) together. If we read these clauses together, then we could find that if 'bamboo' is being omitted from the definition of the 'tree', then the implications of it are too much. The implications and also the ramifications of removing bamboo from the purview of the definition of 'tree' are very high.

Sir, the hon. Minister has rightly pointed out that this Act was enacted during the times of British India and it was aimed at consolidating the law relating to forest. There were three purposes for it. Firstly, consolidating the law relating to forest; secondly, transit of forest produce and thirdly, the duty to be levied on the forest produce. These were the three objectives of enunciating such a law by the Parliament in 1927. When bamboo is taken out of the purview of the definition of tree, as I pointed out just now, the ramifications of it would be beyond our imagination.

Sir, for example, I will cite Section 26 of the Act. Section 26 of the Forest Act says that any person causing any damage to a tree by felling or by cutting or by transiting or by any means, he is punishable with a fine and he is also punishable with imprisonment for six months, or fine or imprisonment both. Almost all the provisions of the Indian Forest Act deals with forest produce.

HON. CHAIRPERSON : Please conclude now.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : Sir, this is a Statutory Resolution as well as the Bill. Two hours have been allotted for this Bill.

HON. CHAIRPERSON: There is also the right to reply.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : I would not make such long reply then. I will conclude.

Sir, if you examine all the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, then you will find that there are trees and also forest produce. If you remove bamboo from the category of 'tree', then that will be affecting the forest produce. Kindly look at the contradiction. I think, the hon. Minister has been misled in this regard.

Sir, you may kindly refer to the Statement of Objects and Reasons of this Bill. I fully agree with the Statement of Objects and reasons of the Bill. Para 2 of the Statement of Objects and Reasons says that farmers are having hardship in getting the permits for felling and transit of bamboos within the State and also for outside the State which has been identified as one of the major impediments for the cultivation of bamboos by the farmers. This is the ground on which the Bill has been brought forward. The farmers are finding it very difficult to plant bamboos and cut and transport the bamboos.

The third para of the Statement of Object and Reasons states that in order to exempt bamboos grown on non-forest area from the requirement of permit for felling or transit under the said Act, it would encourage bamboo plantation by farmers resulting in the enhancement of their incomes from the agricultural fields. I fully agree with the Statement of Object and Reasons.

The hon. Minister in the Statement of Objects and Reasons have specifically stated that this is a matter which is affecting bamboos cultivated in non-forest areas. I fully agree with him. But the provisions of the Bill are confined to the Indian Forest Act of 1927.

HON. CHAIRPERSON: Please conclude now. There are a number of speakers to speak on this Bill and you have taken 10 minutes.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : Moving a Statutory Resolution is a right of a Member just like the hon. Minister moving the Bill. The Member who is moving the Statutory Resolution is also having such a privilege.

HON. CHAIRPERSON: The time allotted for this Bill is two hours. Please conclude now.

SHRI N.K.PREMACHANDRAN : Sir, I will abide by your ruling. I will conclude.

Sir, I have just come to the crux of the Bill. You are talking about non-forest areas in the Objects and Reasons but what is the amendment proposed? The amendment proposed is that the Forest Act is being amended. The ramifications of it are too high.

There are a lot of bamboo forests in our country and in my State also, there are a lot of bamboo forests. If this Bill is passed, no permit is required to cut, remove the bamboos and transit the bamboos which are cultivated in the forests. You may clarify this point afterwards.

Forest permission is required for it. Restriction of cultivation of bamboo in non-forest area has to be removed. That is my point and I have moved an amendment also in this regard. My amendment is that if bamboo is cultivated in the land other than the forests, it is all right but by this Bill, you are taking away bamboo from the definition of the tree and the definition of forest produce. In that case, we are going to convert a forest activity into a non-forest activity. This is my point and exemption is sought for the bamboo grown in the forest area because you are amending the definition of tree in the Forest Act. If this amendment is passed, no permit is required for felling and transiting bamboo as far as the forest produce is concerned.

Bamboo ceases to be a forest produce and regulations and rules regarding the conservation of forests in respect of bamboo are lost. That is the point which I am trying to highlight.

Coming to the significance of bamboo, you are an environmental expert and you are a scientist also and you may know that bamboo plays a vital role in the protection of bio diversity in forests. It is a major component in water conservation and prevents soil erosion. Bamboo is one of the ingredient plants in maintaining the forest eco system. The forest eco system is absolutely maintained by the bamboo structure. Further, it is a major feed for elephants, panda, deer and other animals. So, in the significant ruling of Goda Varma Raja case, the Supreme Court has held that once a forest is declared, it is a forest for ever. So, bamboo forest is there. Suppose bamboo is not a forest and not a tree and does not come under the Forest Act, definitely, the implication is too much. By this amendment, you are converting a forest into a non-forest activity. There are a lot of bamboo forests. As you have rightly said, adivasis or tribal people are not facing difficulty. The right to Forest Act which was passed by the then Government is there. They can very well use bamboo for handicrafts. They can very well use the forest products. It is a fundamental right which is given to the adivasis and the tribal population in the forests for which the Forest Act is also there.

In the name of protecting the interest of the bamboo farmers, it is being stated, subject to clarification, that it is brought for the industry. The Statement of Objects and Reasons and the contents of the Bill are totally contradictory.

Hence, I oppose the Bill and I urge upon the Government to consider my amendment so that the interests of the farmers can be protected.

With these words, I conclude my speech.

HON. CHAIRPERSON : Motions moved:

“That this House disapproves of the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 (Ordinance No.6 of 2017) promulgated by the President on 23 November, 2017.”

“That the Bill further to amend the Indian Forest Act, 1927, be taken into consideration.”

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY (GUWAHATI): Sir, I rise to support the Bill. In fact, the amendment is highly necessary to throw away the lack luster haggard and rules and regulations which do not give any benefit to the poor farmers who grow bamboos.

I want to remind one point to the hon. Member who suggested various amendments. Is the hon. Member aware of the fact that bamboo is grown by the poor people and the tribal people and how much they are benefited? The Government has not permitted to cut forest trees in the forest area. The Government wants to give permission to cut bamboo and use it for the benefit of people in the non-forest land.

Another point is, wood products worth nearly Rs. 10,000 crore have to be imported from foreign countries. If bamboo is grown in such a way that can be easily done, then we can get it at half of the import price.

One more important point is, bamboo is being smuggled to Myanmar and Bangladesh. Thousands of crores of rupees worth of bamboos are exported. They cannot be stopped with all the old laws that continue for the last 70 years since Independence. So, a new set of rules is necessary and hence, this amendment is brought forward.

I do not expect that the hon. Member is anti-poor. If he supports the poor people and poverty stricken people, then he must support the Bill which may bring wonders to these people. The present amendment will serve as a huge piece of luck and a sort of bonanza for the farmers. It will not only improve the economy but also enhance the ecological benefit. After this amendment, the handicaps faced by the farmers while planting bamboo in non-forest land will be free of various shackles to sell different products in different States and different parts of the country. It promotes exports too which will be highly beneficial for the economy also.

This move will surely enhance farmers' income as they are free to grow more and sell more of these products. Farmers will be highly inspired to grow more which they are not able to do at present. This will protect the environment too. As bamboo is economically viable, it serves as a cheap raw material. So, easily the cottage industries, etc. can be developed in the rural areas profusely. This mighty source of forest will be a real treasure especially for the poor people in particular and for the country in general.

Nobody has a vision as to how bamboo can improve ecological balance and side by side improve the plight of the poor and the needy. The constant thinking along with apt vision by our Prime Minister, hon. Modi ji, has made it possible. This neglected resource can be a luck changer to the right kind of people of the country.

Bamboo belongs to the grass family. It is a fast growing plant. It has more than 1,400 species. It is highly versatile and quick renewable resource. In the midst of present change in climate, we feel the urgent need to provide innovative responses to this far neglected and far resourceful product. We consider it as a product of rural area and a product of village people. So, nobody cared about it.

Now, the present Government under the leadership of Shri Narendra Modi ji, and our hon. Minister is thinking very seriously to change the luck of the people.

Prime Minister Modi's challenge is uplifting the downtrodden people who live in far off villages, tribal populated areas and they will be benefited by this amendment. Even after long years of Independence, no Government has thought about it positively to do something in this area. Not only this, bamboo has a cultural and emotional status in various societies and now it will be a great treasure too.

We know that bamboo grows in rain-fed areas. It easily grows in North-Eastern region, Bengal, Odisha, Karnataka, Bihar and in other parts of the country sporadically. We use it in various ways. The hon. Minister has mentioned it. So, I do not like to repeat it.

In the western parts of the country, the bamboo is used as Huggies or nappies for the babies and it is used as napkins by the girls also. It is a highly useful material and they export to various parts of the world. So, our Ministry can think of it in that way also.

It must be admitted that by amending the Forest Act, the Government has almost alleviated the sufferings of the people because farmers are crippled by the red-tapism and by the middle men too. These are the largest hurdles which come in the way of the poor people. By this amendment, Prime Minister's dream project of skill development will get a great boost. It will serve as a spanner for the cottage industries in a large way as this raw material is very cheap in comparison to other ones.

It will help in community development too as huge revenues will be generated. These funds will be available to be used for various development projects which are meant for the needy people. By this move of the Government, farmers will get incentive to grow more bamboo. I must mention one point that the Government should be cautious that big businessmen and big business houses do not exploit these poor farmers taking advantage of the free trade. So, proper market facilities should be made available to the poor people to encourage them to grow bamboo. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister that it is very necessary to give support price initially to farmers who want to grow more bamboo in non-forest areas.

Then, serious research work on bamboo should be undertaken. In Meghalaya, some research on bamboo is being done, but it is not done seriously. So, efforts should be made to promote research and also export of bamboo should be promoted with modern technology which can be brought from outside so that our bamboo products can be exported to different parts of the world.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister for taking steps to rejuvenate this sector which has long been neglected. With these words, I support this Bill.

SHRI G. HARI (ARAKKONAM): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017 replaces the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 and amends the Indian Forest Act, 1927. The Act consolidates laws relating to forests, transit of forest produce and the Duty to be levied on them. Under the Act, the definition of tree includes palms, bamboos, stumps, brushwood and canes. The Bill amends this definition of tree to remove the word 'bamboos'. Since bamboo is defined as a tree under the Act, its inter-State movement requires permit when in transit to other States. Consequent to the amendment, felling or transportation of bamboos grown in non-forest areas will not require any permits.

Bamboo is the most important non-wood forest product and bamboo, in India, is known as the poor man's timber. It is a valuable raw material for the booming bamboo industry. During the last 15 to 20 years, bamboo has developed as a substitute for wood. Bamboo may replace wood in many industrial applications and thereby contribute to the saving and restoration of the world's forests.

Bamboo is a major construction material in many countries, particularly in rural areas. It can be used for almost all parts of houses, including posts, roofs, walls, floors, beams, trusses and fences. People also use bamboo to produce mats, baskets, tools, handles, hats, traditional toys, musical instruments and furniture.

Bamboo has great potential for economic and environmental development and also for international trade. Engineered bamboo may well replace wood, steel and concrete in many uses. Activated bamboo charcoal can be used for cleaning the environment, absorbing excess moisture and for producing medicines. Houses made of engineered bamboo have certain advantages. They can be packed flat and transported long distances at a reasonable cost. They are better designed and environment friendly. Bamboo materials are widely available and can be cultivated at low cost.

The Forest Ministry had, for long, classified bamboo as a tree despite its scientific description as a grass. The classification ensured that under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, bamboo remained under the firm control of forest departments and the tribals got very little benefit.

Bamboo is an intrinsic part of Northeast culture where they eat, sleep and use bamboo daily. Northeast has 45 per cent of global bamboo reserves. But historically, bamboo has never got the recognition it deserves. We are still following the very old Indian Forest Act, 1927. The Act also places various transport and permit related restrictions on plantation grown bamboo. Thus, the trade in bamboo

is severely restricted. But the same does not apply to other forest and plantation products like rubber, coir or tea. Unless bamboo is given the same status, the bamboo industry cannot grow as we desire.

The Northeast Region can supply 90 per cent of the bamboo needed for many sectors. Thousands of rural families can be employed if we reform our policies.

In India, there are five different ministries looking after bamboo. There should be a single commodity board for bamboo, just as we have a Tea Board and a Coir Board. Bamboo is a strong and an earthquake-resistant material. A country like Costa Rica has a national bamboo housing policy. But in our country bamboo is not considered in housing rules and building codes. Why cannot we use Government projects like Indira Awaas Yojana to provide bamboo houses to the rural poor?

Bamboo is a versatile non-wood forest product and also known as poor man's timber. It is a material which accompanies one from cradle to grave. Bamboo is the base for a broad range of rural and semi urban cottage industries that provide livelihood for the rural poor. The Bamboo market across the world is of USD 10 billion out of which USD 5 billion go to China even though India is the second largest producer of bamboo in the world after China. It is estimated that the world market of bamboo will increase to USD 20 billion but India's bamboo market is limited to Rs. 26,000 crores only.

Another great importance of Bamboo plant is its nutritional and medicinal value, especially, in the cases of hypertension, cholesterol and diabetes. In order to meet the growing requirement of timber, bamboo has become fast growing resource. Bamboo is an ideal, innovative and environment friendly natural resource which is also being used for clothing, shelter and for oral consumption. Bamboo is useful for sustainable development of rural and tribal economy.

Successful marketing of bamboo products is the need of the hour. We have to explore new markets within and outside the country. People who are living in villages know the importance of bamboo. If we continue to consider bamboo as part of forest, then nothing will improve. We have to consider it as part of agriculture. Bamboo can lead to economic development of our nation. From fuel to fodder, from meal to medicine, from arrow to airport, bamboo and its products are used. Bamboo habitat is spread from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from Gujarat to Assam.

There is an urgent need for setting up of the National Bamboo Board to promote it as a brand and market bamboo outside. The cultivation of bamboo on private land has to be encouraged.

I hope, this Bill will ensure a better scope for bamboo market in the country and provide the much needed economic growth for the people in the remote villages and tribal lands.

Thank you.

SHRIMATI APARUPA PODDAR (ARAMBAG): Thank you, Sir. I rise to speak on the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017. The Bill has replaced the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance promulgated

by the President of India on November, 23, 2017.

The Indian Forest Act, 1927, which is the parent Act for the above Bill, seeks to consolidate laws relating to forest and transit of forest produce. As has been discussed, the present Bill seeks to amend the definition of "Trees" by omitting the word 'bamboo' from its definition under Section 2, sub-clause 7. The persons producing bamboo would no longer need State permits during transit and selling of bamboo in other States.

Sir, there exist conflicts on the status of bamboo under different laws. Our colonial era law, the Indian Forest Act, 1927, classified bamboo as tree and fallen bamboo as timber. This was contrary to the scientific classification of bamboo as "Grass" which our hon. Minister has already mentioned. Had it been considered 'grass', bamboo would be exempted from many restrictions in cutting and transportation. Although we have a Forest Rights Act, 2006 which classifies bamboo as non-timber, the States have largely applied restrictions on bamboo transit in line with the 1927 Act.

This brings me to another issue. Some States in the country have their own set of laws governing forests. I would like to mention here that this Amendment does not affect the State laws and rules. Thus, in all practicalities, we may end up seeing no change on how bamboo is transported and sold. I wish to ask the Government whether the States have been given the freedom to decide whether permits for bamboo movement are required. Or, are the States expected to follow the amendment being moved, if passed by the House? There is a need for simultaneous change in the laws of all the States to avoid any future uncertainties. This would reduce the burden on farmers for whom the main source of livelihood is bamboo production. India has the largest area under Bamboo cultivation and it is the second richest country in terms of bamboo genetic resources after China. This Bill will generate demand for raw material leading to plantation of bamboo tree on non-forest land, providing employment and encouraging growth of small and medium industry in villages and small towns also.

According to my understanding of the text of the Bill, the amendment pertains only to the definition of 'trees'. However, according to the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the amendment is in order to exempt bamboos grown on non-forest lands. I would like to ask the Minister as to why the Amendment is not drafted to that extent to shed light on the aspect of de-regulation of bamboo for 'non-forest lands'. Is this a patent drafting error from the side of the Government or an attempt to make unseen changes in law? I would request the Government to make change to clarify its position. Also, most bamboo production occurs within forest lands. How are we supporting the cause of helping our farmers if they would not get the benefit of it? The Government should ponder over a solution of the same. The solution should be in line with the environmental considerations and farmers' welfare.

Bamboo has over 1500 documented uses varying from light bulbs to aircraft manufacturing. India has about 30 per cent of bamboo resources. However, our market share in the global market remains roughly about four per cent. The bamboo sector employs 10 million people, which has the

capacity to employ 50 to 129 million people. The need is to harness the domestic and global potential of bamboo use to increase income of our farmers.

Lastly, Sir, I would like to reiterate the disapproval of the process of enacting the Bill. Through you, I urge upon the Government to control its desire of issuing ordinances time and again. This has the effect of bypassing the Parliament's lawmaking powers. The ordinances are becoming an alternate tool of legislation under the present Government.

With these words, I conclude. Thank you, Sir.

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SHRI THATHAGATA SATPATHY (DHENKANAL): Sir, I wish to get my opposition to this Ordinance being turned into a Bill right at the outset. My prime question as Mr. Premachandran has very eloquently put it is: 'who actually in this country has benefited in this period between 23rd November when the Ordinance was passed by the President and today 20th December, 2017? In the Ordinance, it clearly states "whereas Parliament is not in session and the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action". What are these circumstances? What are the conditions under which the Government has advised or compelled the hon. President to take such an action eventually which has been brought into Parliament a month later? Could it not have waited? My personal feeling is this. Please take no offence hon. Minister Sir. You have been misguided by your officials or due to some other extraneous pressures which is not in the interests of, what we are hearing, for the poor and the needy farmers. It is not in their interests. If you remove bamboo from the Indian Forest Act, how do you suppose that it will be saved and you will be able to grow more bamboo? Are you trying to tell us that by creating an atmosphere where there will be privatisation of bamboo been grown? The country will see a greater growth in bamboo clumps or bamboo forests? Will there be more economic activity because privatisation will take place? Is privatisation the only method that we are being told is the panacea to all the evils which faces the forests and the jungles of India? The Indian Forest Act, 1927 actually no longer holds a pre-eminent position in the Indian Forest Law. Most States, including my State of Odisha, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, all of them, have enacted their own Forests Acts and rules. I have, of course, not been that fortunate enough to read the Gujarat Forest Act, but never mind. Gujarat probably is no more your model State that you would like me to refer to it because the *Gujaratis* have been very smart and they have told the whole nation how the country should behave in the future. Amending the IFA does not really, in my opinion, affect the forest laws which the States have enacted and, therefore, this does not change anything at the ground level. It may be true that the British rulers had included bamboo which is scientifically or botanically, I am not sure, whatever is the right word, is of the grass family. There is no doubt about it. There is no second opinion about it.

But why did they do it? It is not that they were eager just to control forest for their financial benefits. They also probably saw, I have a sneaking suspicion, I have nothing to prove my statement but I have a sneaking suspicion that they probably did it because they foresaw how bamboo was relevant for Indians and especially for the tribals and the marginal farmers and they probably took more care of our people than we are doing at present.

In this amendment, the Central Government has put in a caveat that this deregulation does not apply to bamboo grown on forest lands. It is only applying to bamboo grown on non-forest lands. What troubles me is, suppose a truck loaded with bamboo crosses a forest check gate, how does the guard come to know that this bamboo that is being loaded in the truck and is being transported elsewhere, whether it is to Bangladesh or to other parts of India or to Mizoram or to Nagaland or to Odisha or from Odisha to Andhra Pradesh or wherever it is, which land this particular truckload of bamboo comes from? What is your definition? How do you differentiate it? Or, how do you make that forest check guard differentiate it? It is because what I find is that the Government does not take a holistic view or does not take a larger picture/view of the problems facing this country. You are acting exactly like the bureaucrats do.

I remember when I was an MLA in the early 90s' when the late Biju Patnaik Ji was the Chief Minister of Odisha, we had a Million Well Programme. In the Million Well Programme, they were giving off just doles, giving out Rs.35,000 to small and marginal farmers who had landholdings of maximum one-and-a-half acres, and the caveat there was, your well should be 35 feet deep. So, when they started digging wells in Dhenkanal, Angul and in other parts of Odisha, I realised one thing that it is some *babu*, not bamboo—do not give bamboo to everybody—some *babu* sitting in the Central Secretariat in Delhi who has decided that this is the depth where you will strike water, and that water they strike probably, maybe, in Punjab or maybe, in other Indo-Gangetic plain areas but in places away from riverbeds, you do not get anything at 35 feet. I am sure even here in Delhi also—you are a Delhi resident; you are a leader of Delhi and you would know better Sir—if you dig 35 feet, you would not get water. You will only get the drain water and nothing else beyond that.

So, this also is indicative that you probably have been misguided or extraneous elements have come into play by which this Ordinance has been promulgated in such a manner, and now we are being forced to pass it as an Act. As you might know, Sir, in regard to bamboo and products coming from bamboo, like bamboo shoots, you have two ways. You have the expensive Chinese restaurants. You can go there and eat Chinese bamboos or bamboo shoots cooked in a Chinese manner. But in my State, there are Adivasis who eat bamboo shoots as a regular dietary supplement. There are also indications which a bamboo clump gives. I am not aware how many people are aware of this. There is a very long dry spell when rains will be disturbed and crops might be affected. You will find bamboo gives out a kind of paddy, *chawal*. The bamboo flower gives off the greens. I know it because I have eaten it myself and it is really tasty. The people eat it and it is very nutritious.

17.08 hours*(Hon. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)*

So, when you are allowing this differentiation, what you are doing is, you are actually striking at the stomach of the poor and the smallest of the farmers. It is wrong to say or you cannot say like you cannot take the name of Jesus, Holy Christ and get away with anything. Similarly, you cannot always say that it is for the poor and for the needy farmer. The farmer does not really require our compassion. They do not require our *daya*. They want us to keep away and leave them alone. They know how to fend for themselves. The farmer was here long before we, the so-called elite, came up on this land, pillaged and damaged it. So, let us respect the farmers; let us respect the poor; let us not talk to them like they are below us; and let us take care of them. Sir, I think it would be in the right spirit of things if you will take back this Bill, get into the details, work out the details as to how it can be implemented properly and then re-introduce it again. Do not make this Ordinance be forced to the gullets of Parliament.

Also, please let us know what are the Acts or who are the beneficiaries between 23rd November and 20th December, 2017. Why was this done in such a hurried manner? Thank you, Sir.

SHRI MUTHAMSETTI SRINIVASA RAO (AVANTHI) (ANAKAPALLI): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017. It is a simple Bill. It would put an end to the need for getting permission to transport bamboo.

Under the Act, the definition of 'tree' includes palms, bamboos, stumps, brush-wood and canes. The Government has brought this Bill to amend this definition to remove the word 'bamboos'. It is proposed to waive off the requirement of permission for felling or transportation of bamboo grown in non-forest areas for economic use. I am sure this amendment will encourage farmers and other individuals to take up bamboo cultivation under agro-forestry mission. This step will go a long way in enhancing the agricultural income of farmers and tribals, especially in Northeast and Central India and, to some extent, in the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh.

India has the largest area under bamboo cultivation and is the second richest in terms of bamboo genetic resources after China. This amendment to the Bill is actually in line with the objective of doubling the income of farmers, besides conservation and sustainable development.

Before this amendment, the felling and transit of bamboo grown on forest as well as non-forest land attracted provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. At that time, the Government convinced that the amendment and the resultant change in classification of bamboo grown in non-forest areas will usher in much needed and far-reaching reforms in the bamboo sector.

Sir, some of the other benefits of amendment include enhanced supply of raw material to the traditional craftsmen of rural India, bamboo based paper and pulp industries, cottage industries, furniture making units, fabric making units and incense stick making units.

Apart from promoting major bamboo applications such as wood substitutes and composites like panels, flooring, furniture and bamboo blind, it will also help industries dealing with food products like bamboo shoots, construction and housing, etc.

Sir, the amendment Bill will also greatly help in the success of recently constituted National Bamboo Mission. We are currently importing timber and allied products such as pulp, paper and furniture, etc. So, this will save valuable foreign exchange.

Before I conclude my speech, I want to give a small piece of advice to the hon. Minister. All of us also have to think about the pollution. Everyday we read about it in the newspapers, especially in Delhi and other metros. It is the responsibility of all of us, the representatives and the Government. We have to make the tree plantation activity mandatory in urban areas.

In Andhra Pradesh, under the guidance of our hon. Chief Minister we spend every second Saturday in tree plantation activities. So, it is very much necessary for all of us to control pollution and help in maintaining the ecological balance throughout the country. That is why, I request the hon. Minister to focus on tree plantation as well. Though it is not related to this Bill, I wanted to give this piece of advice to the hon. Minister.

With these words, I reiterate my support to the Bill. I thank the hon. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, for giving me this opportunity.

SHRI JITENDRA CHAUDHURY (TRIPURA EAST): Hon. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill brought by the Government for amending the Indian Forest Act in order to treat bamboo as grass instead of tree, as is mentioned in the original Act, is a welcome one. Of course, this is a right step being taken by the Government and I do appreciate that.

Sir, simply changing the treatment of bamboo as grass instead of tree, I think, will not suffice. There are so many things which are being manufactured with bamboo in our country. Hon. Minister also in his preliminary speech made the statement that India is the second richest in bamboo resources in the world, next only to China. In India, there are 125 indigenous and 11 exotic species belonging to 23 genera. Out of the huge resources we have in India, about 60 per cent grow naturally in the North-Eastern region.

When some of my learned colleagues participated in the debate, they talked about the legality or illegality of bringing this legislation here. I am not going into that; I am going into the other aspect of

bamboo. In the eastern part of our neighbouring country, China, bamboo has become the main source of their economy. Bamboo is the source for industry as a raw material and an economy worth billions of dollars is being generated there out of bamboo. Also, billions of people, right from bamboo growing stage to its industrial use stage, are being engaged. In India, why is bamboo not treated with that objective to see how it can be economically utilized for the benefit of our people? I would like to cite an example from my State of Tripura.

Sir, as you know, in the early eighties, the entire hill areas, where the tribals were inhabiting, got infected with insurgency. Then, the Government introduced rubber plantation in the hill areas because rubber is an exotic plant in our part of the country. In Tripura, rubber is a major source of economy in the hill areas, and mostly the tribals and very small and marginalized farmers are growing it. In combating insurgency, this economic activity through rubber has helped a lot. It has become a game changer. On similar lines, I would like to emphasise today that in the North-Eastern region and rest of the country where bamboo is being grown, like Andhra Pradesh and other States, bamboo should be taken up for uplifting the economies of those regions by setting up industries based on bamboo. There should be done an R&D exercise in this regard. A separate wing can be established in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. In India also, we can have a huge industry and consequently employment generation out of that.

In addition, since bamboo grows naturally – it is another debate whether it is tree or grass – it does not require much of expenditure on fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides etc. The only thing is that it has to be processed in a time bound manner and you have to put in place the technology so that it can be used. It is very unfortunate that the subject of bamboo in our country is dealt with by several Departments and several Ministries. Of course, it comes under the Forest Ministry to see to it whether it is tree, grass or species. The Forest Department takes care of its production only and no other thing, like how economic activities and employment generation could happen with the help of bamboo. The Forest Department does not have any thinking on that.

During the UPA's time, the NMB has been created under the Science and Technology Department, and sometimes this subject has also been dealt by the Agriculture Department. Here, what we have seen is that crores of money has been spent. Some of our experts, scientists and even some bureaucrats have travelled across the globe and delivered lectures, but nothing has happened on the ground as to how best these resources could be utilised for the economy and for employment generation. This was not done.

Secondly, I would like to request that since bamboo is growing in the hilly areas and almost 60 per cent of the bamboo resource is in the North-Eastern Region, now after the enactment of the Forest Right Act for the right of the tribals and traditional forest dwellers, automatically bamboo has been treated as a minor forest produce in the Forest Right Act. While it is declared as a minor forest produce, the tribal communities that live in the hilly / forest areas where the bamboo grows naturally are

exempted from some taxes, etc. that are imposed. I think that it should be maintained, namely, in the hilly / tribal areas where the *adivasi* people are living and where the bamboo is growing, and they can have their income generated out of it.

In this Parliament itself the CAMPA Bill has been amended. Earlier, huge amount was stuck up and it was thought as to how to release the fund, and there the amendment has been made and main role has been framed, etc. But what do we find here? It is seen that the money that is made available under CAMPA should be spent for re-plantation and also for these forest areas where the indigenous people and the *adivasi* people live.

What are we witnessing today? We are witnessing that the CAMPA money instead of being used for aforestation activity is being used for other activities in the Forest Department, which is not benefiting the forest dwelling people / the *adivasi* people and other people.

I can cite another example. Of course, this amendment is aimed for the benefit of the people and also to see how the bamboo resources can be further expanded and production further increased. In our country, the most important ingredient of the incessant stick comes from the North East and mostly from my State Tripura. Some 6-7 years ago, more than 60 per cent of the incessant sticks used to go from Tripura and Assam to the mainland of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Sivakasi where the incessant sticks / agarbatti, etc. were produced, but now day by day the supply of incessant sticks from the North East is getting reduced. We have examined as to why it is happening and what is the reason behind it. Are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka or Odisha and other bamboo growing States supplying the incessant sticks? Of course, bamboo is there, but in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha incessant stick making has not started in that way and still its source is the North-Eastern Region.

What are the other sources that reduced supply from the North Eastern Region? Now, it is coming from Vietnam and some other Asian countries. Why is the industry importing incense sticks from Asian countries, from Vietnam in particular? That is because the import duty on incense sticks was, like on many other ingredients, 30 per cent earlier and it has been reduced to almost zero. While the incense sticks from Vietnam come to Indian on ships, incense sticks from the North-East travel to the mainland by road in trucks. As a result, their transport cost is higher. As a consequence, the very poor people in the North-Eastern region are losing their jobs. I would like to say to the hon. Minister that while it is very positive that the amendment has been brought, mere bringing it will not suffice. Bamboo has to be optimally utilised in our country. We are the second richest in the world as far as bamboo is concerned. The application of bamboo should be scientifically, commercially thought out with a long-term plan so that the forest dwelling people, the tribals are benefited. If that is done, it will be a game changer for the most backward regions of the North-East. I think the Government of India will support us on that and in the future in collaboration with Commerce and other Departments, not only the Environment Department but in totality, bamboo should be thought of. That way we can really do justice to the resources and we can really do justice to our economy and also generate employment.

Thank you.

SHRI KONDA VISHWESHWAR REDDY (CHEVELLA): Thank you, Sir, for the opportunity.

When you take a piece of wire and pass electricity through it, it becomes hot and sometimes it glows. Thomas Edison actually saw this and he realised that he could actually create light out of electricity. Then he tried everything on earth, he tried copper, he tried aluminium, he tried iron, he put them in a glass bulb, and it was glowing but not giving out enough light. Then he burnt a piece of bamboo strand, it became carbon and he put it in a glass bulb, and when it glowed, it gave out light. Let that same light shine upon us and decide what is in the best interest of the country, best interest of the poor tribals and best interest of our economy.

Actually, Sir, to be very frank, we came here trying to support the Bill. That light has really shone, Sir, when two people have enlightened us. Premachandran-ji has enlightened us and Satpathy-ji and a few others have enlightened us. Today, after being a little more enlightened, we decided that this Bill needs a review. This definitely needs a review because it is also suspect. What is the reason, it has now become a habit, for taking this route of Ordinance and pushing a Bill in the Parliament with such urgency? That itself raises suspicions. After having heard luminaries in the Parliament here, I would say that while the objects and reasons for bringing this Bill are very valid, the Bill itself conflicts with its own objects and reasons. So, I think we probably have to review it, probably send it to a Committee, and we need to have another opportunity to have a better Bill presented in the Parliament.

While Thomas Edison created light out of a bamboo strand - we have been to the North-East in the Industry Committee earlier this year – thousands of tonnes of bamboo is being burnt in NTPC power plant as a substitute for coal. The farmers there get Rs.1000 a tonne. The same tonne of bamboo which I wanted to import to Telangana, for a reason I will explain later, costs about Rs.10,000 to Rs.15,000 a tonne. The value which is Rs. 1,000 in one part of India is Rs. 12,000 in another part of India. We wanted to get a few truckloads of bamboo costing only about Rs. 20,000 but the transportation cost was Rs. 2 lakh, which is about ten times more.

We need to focus on other areas. If you really want to develop bamboo, let us focus on those areas of improving transportation, reducing exports, and improving the khadi and village industries. Every time we go to the North-East to buy bamboo when Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana are also growing bamboo. This is because the bamboo industry promoted by the KVIC is in a dismal state. So, if our interest is to promote bamboo and bamboo industries, let us look at these aspects.

An hon. MP was speaking about the *agarbatti* or incense sticks. It is not only about incense sticks but Hyderabad is famous for kite flying. Next month, we are all going to fly kites. The spines of the kites are also imported. The shipments of bamboo for incense sticks have reduced from the North-East but increased from Thailand and Vietnam. So, let us focus on these areas.

We can focus on the River Brahmaputra as the means of transportation. If the River Brahmaputra were to be used as the means of transportation, we can make it legal by making an amendment to the Act without changing the definition because it has a much larger impact as Shri Premachandran and Shri Satpathy had mentioned. Let us focus only on that area. You are concerned only about the non-forest bamboo. Let us focus on discussions with Bangladesh for getting the bamboo transported down to the ports and supply to the whole of India at lower costs. That will have a huge impact on the bamboo industry.

Shri Tathagat Satpathy spoke about the bamboo shoots as a food source. It is a Chinese delicacy. It is available in the Chinese restaurants but in the tribal areas also they eat it. I also remember a Chinese torture. They make you eat bamboo shoot curry. When you eat that curry, the bamboo goes into your stomach.

It expands the pain causing severe pain; ultimately, it will burst open the stomach and kill the prisoner. So, let this Bill be not one of those Chinese tortures where we pass this Bill today and tomorrow it kills the bamboo industry.

Thank you very much, Sir.

श्री सुनील कुमार सिंह (चतरा) : माननीय उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, भारतीय वन अधिनियम में संशोधन करने के लिए भारतीय वन (संशोधन) विधेयक, 2017 लाया गया है। मैं इसके समर्थन में बोलने के लिए खड़ा हुआ हूँ।

मेरे से पहले बहुत-से विद्वान सदस्यों ने अपनी बातें कही हैं। मैं चाहूँगा कि यदि समय की मर्यादा हो, तो आप मुझे बोलने के लिए थोड़ा समय दें। मैं संसदीय कार्य मंत्री जी से भी आग्रह करूँगा कि इसके लिए थोड़ी अवधि बढ़ाएँगे क्योंकि अब तक देश को पता ही नहीं चला होगा कि सदन में बहस किस बात पर हो रही है। मुझे नहीं लगता है कि बम्बू के बारे में पूरा देश जानता होगा। मैं सदन में इस विधेयक के माध्यम से, जो 'बांस' की परिभाषा बदली गई है और जिस 'बांस' को जानने वाले हमारे ट्राइबल्स, हमारे किसान, गाँव में रहने वाले दूर-दूर बैठे लोग हैं, उन तक अपनी बात पहुँचाना चाहूँगा।

एक सवाल उठा है कि यह टाइमिंग क्यों, लेकिन यह किसी ने नहीं पूछा कि 90 वर्षों तक एक औपनिवेशिक कानून चलता रहा और उसे बदला क्यों नहीं गया। अंग्रेजों की नीयत के बारे में आज सुनकर बहुत अच्छा लगा कि उन्होंने कुछ कानून हमारे लिए बनाए थे।

महोदय, हम तो यही जानते थे कि बांस के माध्यम से कागज बनाने के लिए यूरोप में ले जाने के लिए इस पर रोक लगाई गई थी। बॉटनी और बाकी पाठ्यक्रमों में जिसे घास कहा जाता है, उसे आप ट्री कहते थे। आज जब उस परिभाषा को ठीक करने का वक्त आया है, तो टाइमिंग पर संदेह और सवाल उठ रहे हैं। निश्चित रूप से यह एक महत्वपूर्ण और ऐतिहासिक निर्णय है। वर्ष 2022 तक हमारी सरकार ने माननीय प्रधान मंत्री नरेद्र मोदी जी के नेतृत्व में यह निर्णय लिया है कि हम किसानों की आय को दोगुना करेंगे। इस संबंध में किसानों की आय को दोगुना करने के मामले में जितने भी उपाय हैं, खास कर जो छोटे-छोटे काम हैं, उनके माध्यम से हम इस काम को पूरा करेंगे।

महोदय, हम छोटे लोग हैं। हम इन छोटे-छोटे कामों और इस देश की छोटी जनता के माध्यम से अपने देश को वैश्विक शक्ति का केन्द्र बनाना चाहते हैं। आज हम 43 हजार करोड़ रुपयों से ऊपर विदेशी मुद्रा टिम्बर के लिए व्यय करते हैं। यह टिम्बर विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में उपयोग में आता है। इसकी परिभाषा बदली जाएगी। लोग कहते हैं कि यह खाने के काम में आता है, लेकिन उन्हें यह नहीं पता है कि बांस की खेती में यदि लगातार कटाई नहीं होगी, तो बांस फलेगा नहीं, फूलेगा नहीं और उसकी खेती नहीं हो सकती है। बांस की खेती इस वजह से कम होती जा रही है।

महोदय, मैं जिस क्षेत्र से आता हूँ, आज वह 40-45 प्रतिशत जंगल का क्षेत्र है। मेरे झारखंड के चतरा लोक सभा क्षेत्र में तीन-तीन रिजर्व फॉरेस्ट्स हैं। वहाँ का बेटला फॉरेस्ट साल लकड़ी और बांस के उत्पादन के लिए प्रसिद्ध है। इस कारण यह निर्णय शक्तिशाली और स्वावलंबी भारत के निर्माण की दिशा में बहुत अच्छा कदम है। आज तक हमारे ट्राइबल किसानों को जो हक नहीं मिल सका, वह इसके माध्यम से मिलेगा। बांस की खेती में यदि सिल्विकल्चर ऑपरेशन और हारवेस्टिंग की प्रक्रिया लगातार नहीं चलेगी, तो बांस की खेती स्वतः मर जाएगी। यदि किसी को यह देखना है, तो मैं उसे निमंत्रण देता हूँ कि वह मेरे साथ चलकर बेटला फॉरेस्ट और पलामू टाइगर रिजर्व में इसे देखे।

महोदय, यह आवश्यक है कि हम इसके माध्यम से किसानों को प्रोत्साहन दें। इसके लिए मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह आग्रह करूँगा कि उनके पास जो रिजर्व फॉरेस्ट्स हैं, जिन में 'सिल्विकल्चर ऑपरेशन' और 'हारवेस्टिंग' का काम इन दिनों बंद हो गया है, उसकी प्रक्रिया में तेजी लाई जाए ताकि लगातार कटाई से उसका उन्नयन हो सके।

महोदय, मैं संक्षेप में कहूँगा कि इस परिभाषा में जो शब्द हटाया गया है, उससे निश्चित रूप से बांस की खेती में बहुत बढ़ोतरी होगी। मैं यह बात इसलिए कह रहा हूँ क्योंकि मेरे क्षेत्र से बांस डालमिया नगर की फैक्ट्री में जाता था। आज यह फैक्ट्री बिहार में है, परंतु परिवहन के रिस्ट्रिक्शंस के चलते डालमिया नगर स्थित यह फैक्ट्री बांस न मिल पाने के कारण बंद हो गई। मेरे क्षेत्र का बांस उद्योग अपने स्टेट में नजदीक में कोई पेपर मिल न रहने के कारण समाप्त हो गया। आसपास के राज्य जैसे कि ओडिशा में बांस का उत्पादन होता है। ओडिशा मेरे यहाँ से बहुत दूर नहीं है, लेकिन हमारे किसान अपने बांस को वहाँ नहीं ले जा सकते थे। इस नियम के माध्यम से निश्चित रूप से किसानों को लाभ होगा। कई लोगों ने इस संबंध में बहुत सी बातें कही हैं। इन बातों को ध्यान में रखते हुए मैं सिर्फ यह बताऊँगा कि 1 टन बांस लगभग 350 लोगों को रोजगार उपलब्ध करवाने में सक्षम है। आज हमारे यहाँ बांस का लगभग 10.50 मिलियन टन स्टॉक पैदा हो रहा है। इससे 2 करोड़ लोगों को किसी न किसी रूप में काम मिला हुआ है।

महोदय, संयुक्त राएट्र संघ के औद्योगिक विकास संगठन के आकलन के अनुसार अकेले उत्तर पूर्व-नॉर्थ ईस्ट क्षेत्र में जिसमें भारत का पूर्वी भाग शामिल नहीं है, वहाँ यदि बांस की खेती को प्रोत्साहन दिया जाए, तो वहाँ लगभग 5 हजार करोड़ रुपये का कारोबार होने की संभावना है। इसके माध्यम से उत्तर पूर्व के क्षेत्रों की अर्थव्यवस्था में सुधार का काफी स्कोप है। हमें इस ओर भी विचार करना चाहिए।

माननीय मंत्री जी ने इसे पूअर्स टिम्बर, ग्रीन गोल्ड कहा है और यह सही भी है। आज पूरे विश्व की अर्थव्यवस्था में बांस का योगदान 12 अरब अमेरिकी डॉलर से अधिक है। इसलिए इसकी सम्भावनाओं के बारे में सरकार को विचार करना होगा और बांस की खेती को हर राज्य में हर क्षेत्र में प्रोत्साहन देना होगा।

महोदय, चूंकि समय का अभाव है, अन्यथा मैं अपने क्षेत्र के बांस की खेती और उत्पाद की विस्तृत जानकारी सदन में रखता ।

महोदय, सत्पथी जी ने बांस से उत्पन्न होने वाले खाद्य पदार्थ के बारे में बताया कि वह पैडी की तरह होता है। उनको मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि यदि बांस की लगातार कटाई नहीं होगी तो वह उत्पन्न नहीं होगा। बांस भोजन का स्रोत है और 100 ग्राम बांस के बीज में 60 ग्राम से अधिक कार्बोहाइड्रेट और 265 कैलोरी ऊर्जा होती है, इसलिए हम इसको अल्टरनेटिव फूड सोर्स के रूप में भी उपयोग कर सकते हैं। बांस की खेती तीन से पांच साल में उपज देना प्रारम्भ कर देती है। अन्य फसलों में सूखे, कीट और बीमारियों का असर होता है, लेकिन बांस की खेती पर कीट और सूखे का अधिक प्रभाव नहीं पड़ता है और बांस अन्य पेड़ों के मुकाबले 30 प्रतिशत अधिक ऑक्सीजन छोड़ता है और कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड खींचता है। साथ ही, यह पीपल की तरह दिन में कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड खींचता है और रात में ऑक्सीजन छोड़ता है, इसलिए इस दृष्टि से भी यह मानव के लिए उपयोगी है। इसीलिए इसके माध्यम से खासकर झारखण्ड जैसे राज्य में जहां चतरा, लातेहार, गिरिडीह, जमेशदपुर का चाकुलिया में इस कानून के माध्यम से एक परिवर्तन आएगा और इस कानून के माध्यम से इसकी खेती को आगे बढ़ाने में सक्षम होंगे। एक हेक्टेयर में पांच मीटर की दूरी पर अगर बांस के पेड़ लगाए जाएं तो 330 कॉलम लगेंगे जिसमें लगभग 1650 से 2970 बांस का उत्पादन होगा जो झारखण्ड जैसे राज्य में 80 से 100 रुपये में बिकता है, जिसकी कीमत किसानों को प्रति हेक्टेयर कम से कम 1 लाख 32 हजार से 2 लाख 37 हजार 600 रुपये मिलने की सम्भावना है। इसलिए माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी के नेतृत्व में डॉ. हरोनवर्द्धन जी जो बिल लेकर आए हैं, वह देश की अर्थव्यवस्था और किसानों के योगदान से भारत को दुनिया में सिरमौर बनाने का एक उपाय है।

बाँस के अनेक प्रकार हैं। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी को बताना चाहूंगा कि कुछ राज्यों में बांस की कुछ प्रजातियों पर रोक लगा दी गयी है। मेरे पास झारखण्ड सरकार की एक अधिसूचना है, जिसमें उन्होंने बांस को तो मुक्त किया है, लेकिन बांस की एक प्रजाति जिसे *Dendrocalamus strictus* कहते हैं; इसे आम बोलचाल की भाषा में लाठी बांस कहते हैं, जो बहुतायत में वहां पायी जाती है। अगर इसका कल्टीवेशन न हो तो वह समाप्त हो जाती है। इसलिए इसका ध्यान रखना है कि इस पर रिस्ट्रिक्शन न लगायी जाए। इस पर बहुत रिसर्च हुई है, खास तौर से मेरे क्षेत्र में स्थित विनोबा भावे विश्वविद्यालय, हजारीबाग के प्रध्यापकों श्री दिवाकर प्रसाद निराला, एस.सी. जैन और फालो कुमारी ने पूरे क्षेत्र में बांस के उत्पादन पर अनेक रिसर्च किए हैं, जो जर्नल्स में भी आए हैं। समय का अभाव है, इसलिए क़ोट नहीं कर पा रहा हूँ। अंत में मैं बांस की उपयोगिता पर उस रिसर्च से क़ोट करना चाहूंगा -

“Bamboo provides cradle to coffin by utilization in every possible way. Many cultural traditions and customs in North Chota Nagpur are ultimately connected with bamboo. Even today, bamboo continues to find new uses. It is a major source of income and encouragement of bamboo cottage industries in the North Chota Nagpur may increase the economic level of the poor people. Bamboo is one of the most important and precious plant resources for the people of North Chota Nagpur division of Jharkhand. It provides food, fodder, fuel, housing and shelter for indigenous community of tribal people. It is the part of life for poor people.”

मैं अंत में एक ही बात कहकर अपनी बात समाप्त करूंगा कि समग्र और एकात्म विकास के लिए आवश्यक है कि एथिक्स एजुकेशन यानी टेक्नोलॉजी, इकोनॉमिक्स, इकोलॉजी और इनवॉयरमेंट की इंटीग्रेटेड अप्रोच चाहिए और इसके माध्यम से इसी इंटीग्रेटेड अप्रोच में हम टेक्नोलॉजी का सहारा लेकर बांस के उत्पादों को वैश्विक स्तर का बना सकते हैं और बांस के माध्यम से चतरा, लातेहार, गिरिडीह, पलामू, गढ़वा और चकुलिया जैसे क्षेत्र की गरीब जनता, किसान, आदिवासी, पिछड़े समुदाय को एक नया जीवन दे सकते हैं। उनकी आय को बढ़ा सकते हैं, धन्यवाद।

SHRI PREM DAS RAI (SIKKIM): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me this opportunity to participate in, what I call, a very important amendment Bill, the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017. It is basically a very simple amendment which seeks to remove the definition of 'bamboo' away from the definition of a 'tree'. This has been done by just removing it from Section 2 (vii) of the Indian Forest Act of 1927.

Sir, much has been said about bamboo. But let me just give you one example. On 18th of September, 2011, the State of Sikkim witnessed the biggest earthquake which measured almost 6.8 on the Richter scale and caused a lot of havoc throughout the State. There was not only loss of life and property but the entire communication system, telephone communication, mobile telephony was disrupted as well as disruptions on land. What happened then was the resilience of the Panchayats were brought to bear and the single grass that significantly helped everybody during that particular period was bamboo. Bamboo, therefore, is such a resilient species of grass that it could be used as disaster risk reduction resource. I must say that even today we have the Mantham lake which was created out of a landslide and people from one part of North Sikkim were completely cut off, even though there are roads on the other side because of the formation of this particular lake. What did the people of that area do? They made a bamboo bridge over that particular lake and are able to now cross on foot. This is the quality of this particular species and to unleash it from all kinds of regulation is, I think, the most important piece of legislation that I have witnessed for a very long time.

Sir, it also validates the point that in the year 2014, I had brought an exact Private Member's Bill. Therefore, it is one of the most significant things that, I think, has happened in Parliament that a Bill which was brought as a Private Member's Bill, exactly the same has now been brought forward by the Government for passing. I am not sure whether this has anything to do with what the hon. Minister quoted that the inspiration came from somewhere else, but hopefully something also came from this. But the background to this and my own participation in this discussion is that I have done enough research on the subject. I have done research; we had sent out people, researchers into the whole of the North-East. They had visited several States including Tripura, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim and found that the problems that were related were mainly regulatory.

Let me also inform the hon. Member from Tripura that there are reasons for the high cost and the low demand of transportation of incense sticks. When bamboo has to cross borders, even streams and other places, the amount of rent-seeking behaviour that is seen along the transportation chain is just too much. Therefore, the cost of transportation actually goes up.

Hence, I agree completely with some of the Members here that we need to take a very holistic approach and that approach is definitely required but the first and most significant step is to actually redefine bamboo or take it away from the definition of tree which the colonial powers had wanted us to do in their own way.

I have a lot to say but I can see you shaking your head which means that I have to conclude shortly.

The Indian Forest Act, 1927 wrongly classified this as already stated. But there are subsequent Supreme Court orders which stand contrary to the classification and it is important for us to look at them.

Firstly, the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (40 of 1996) directs the State Governments *vide* section 4 (m) (ii), to ensure that the panchayats at the appropriate level and the Gram Sabhas are endowed specifically with the ownership of minor forest produce. However, 'minor forest produce' is not defined in the Act.

In a clarification by the Supreme Court *vide* its orders dated 12.12.1996 in *T.N. Godavarman Thirumulkpad versus Union of India*, it said the orders "does not cover minor forest produce, including bamboo, etc." Here, bamboo is considered a minor forest produce.

While realising that this order may have serious implications in National Parks and sanctuaries, the Court revised its stand and in I.A. No. 707, order dated 18.02.2002, it ruled that "cutting of trees does not include bamboo and cane, which really belongs to the grass family, other than those in the national parks and sanctuaries. In other words, no bamboo including cane in national parks and sanctuaries can be cut but the same may be cut elsewhere". Here, bamboo was correctly classified as a grass.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (2 of 2007) *vide* section 2 (i) defines minor forest produce to include "all non-timber forest produce of plant origin including bamboo". Further, it also gave forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers *vide* section 3 (1) (c) the right of "ownership, access to collect, use and dispose of minor forest produce which have been traditionally collected within or outside village boundaries".

Such is the complication of this particular species that today it has been removed and the simplification process has started. Indeed this will see the flourishing of industry and value addition to this great produce of ours. One has to just look at China and see the billions of dollars worth of varieties of produce which the hon. Minister had also alluded to.

I would like to make a final submission. From the scientific part, the hon. Minister has actually seen the opportunities. But what is the opportunity here? The opportunity is Make in India and Start-up India. There are opportunities for the people in the North-East and other bamboo growing areas. If you want to do any value addition, then there will be a spawning of processing industries. Those products are of mechanical nature and some of these processing equipment need to be made. Jalandhar and Ludhiana are the best places where they would flourish so that we can make the machinery that is required within India.

Thank you, Sir.

श्री जय प्रकाश नारायण यादव (बाँका) : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, आपने मुझे बोलने का अवसर दिया, इसके लिए आपका धन्यवाद करता हूँ। भारतीय वन (संशोधन) विधेयक, 2017 आज इस सदन में लाया गया है। कुछ आपत्तियों के साथ हम अपनी बात को रखेंगे।

महोदय, बाँस का उत्पादन देश में बढ़े, वन क्षेत्र से ले कर ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों तक बढ़े, यह हर कोई चाहता है और इसकी जरूरत भी है। खास कर जो पूर्वोत्तर के राज्य हैं, असम से ले कर पूर्वोत्तर के सभी राज्य हैं, झारखण्ड का भाग है और बिहार का भी वह इलाका, जिस इलाके के संसदीय क्षेत्र से मैं स्वयं आता हूँ, जो कि बाँका संसदीय क्षेत्र कहलाता है और हमारा जमुई और मुंगेर का क्षेत्र, जंगलों का, पहाड़ों का प्रकृति की गोद में हँसता हुआ इलाका, जहां बाँस की भी खेती बड़े पैमाने पर होती है। इससे रोज़गार के अवसर भी पैदा होंगे, जो ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था है वह सुदृढ़ होगी, बाँस से हाथ की कारीगरी होती है, बाँस से अनेक सामान बनते हैं। यह कुटीर उद्योग का साधन भी है और गरीबों की आय का स्रोत भी है। जो गांव के गरीब हैं, दलित हैं, शोणित हैं, उपेक्षित हैं, लाचार हैं, बेबस हैं, जो आदिवासी भाई हैं, यह उनकी आय का स्रोत है। बाँस से विभिन्न प्रकार की कारीगरी होती है, जैसे डलिया बनती है, सूप बनती है, टोपी बनती है, बर्तन बनते हैं, मिट्टी ढोने के काम में आता है, अनाज ढोने के काम में आता है, चटाई बनती है, चचरी बनता है, यहां तक कि सब्जी भी बनती है, कॉटेज बनते हैं, शादी में जो मंडप बनता है, उसमें भी बाँस को लगाया जाता है, घर की सजावट में, घर की किवाड़ में बाँस को लगाया जाता है, जो तीर और धनुष बनता है, वह भी बाँस का बनता है।

महोदय, खास कर उत्तर भारत में और कई जगहों पर पूजा पाठ में भी जैसे छठ पर्व होता है, उसमें आस्था रखने वाली करोड़ों माँ-बहनें जो सूर्य की पूजा करती हैं, छठ का व्रत रखते हैं, वे बाँस की डलिया में ही और बाँस के माध्यम से ही सुबह का अर्घ्य देते हैं और शाम का अर्घ्य भी देने का काम करते हैं, इसीलिए बाँस का उत्पादन अत्यंत आवश्यक है और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में तो अत्यंत आवश्यक है। इसके पत्ते जानवर, मवेशी और बकरी आदि खाते हैं। यह आदिवासी भाइयों के लिए बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण है, जो जंगल में रहते हैं। आदिवासी भाई जल, जमीन और जंगल के बीच रहते हैं, उनकी सुविधाओं को, उनकी अर्थव्यवस्थाओं को, उनके कुटीर उद्योग को बढ़ाना हमारी जिम्मेदारी है, यह मैं मंत्री जी से कहना चाहता हूँ। नहीं तो बिचौलिये हर जगह से व्यवसाय में घुस जाते हैं। गांवों में सब्जी होती है, उसको ले जाते हैं, बाँस की खेती होती है, उसको ले जाते हैं, कई दूसरे उद्योग हैं, जैसे रेशम का उद्योग है और मधु का उद्योग है, उसमें बिचौलिये ले जाते हैं। आज कई ऐसे व्यवसाय हैं, जिनमें महिलाएं लगी हुई हैं। बाँस से कई चीज़ें बनती हैं। कुदाल बनता है, तांगे में काम आता है, पर्यावरण के लिए उपयोगी है। यह श्रमिक, गांव और किसानों के लिए लाभकारी होना चाहिए। जब बाढ़ आती है तो चचरी बना कर गांव के लोग बाँस पर चलते हैं। इसको शौचालय में लगाया जाता है, गौशाला बनाने के काम में आता है। एक तरफ तो ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के लिए बाँस का उत्पादन है, दूसरा जो वन क्षेत्र है, उसमें अगर हम छूट दे देंगे तो बड़े पैमाने पर इसका शोणण होगा और बड़े पैमाने पर इसकी अवैध कटाई होगी। लोगों ने वैसे भी अवैध कटाई कर के बड़े पैमाने पर जंगलों को नष्ट करने का काम किया है, चाहे वह झारखण्ड का जंगल हो, बिहार का जंगल हो या पूर्वांचल का जंगल हो। जो बड़े जमींदार हैं, उन लोगों ने कटाई की है। इसीलिए इस मामले में पूरी पॉवर केन्द्र सरकार लेना चाहती है। हम कहना चाहते हैं कि इसमें राज्य सरकार की भी सहभागिता होनी चाहिए। ...(व्यवधान) बस दो मिनट और बोल कर मैं अपनी बात को समाप्त करूंगा।

18.00 hours

केन्द्र सरकार इस पावर को अपने हाथों में न लेकर राज्य सरकार से भी समान रूप से इसके लिए बात करनी चाहिए। मैं मानता हूँ कि आज कई चीजों के लिए बाँस का उत्पादन होना चाहिए। इस उद्योग का शोषण नहीं होना चाहिए, ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में इसको बढ़ावा देना चाहिए और इन चीजों को जोड़कर वन क्षेत्र को हमें आगे बढ़ाना चाहिए। वन क्षेत्र हमारा सबसे बड़ा साधन है और खासकर गरीब लोगों के लिए, जो जंगल में रहते हैं, पहाड़ों पर रहते हैं। यह उनकी आय का स्रोत भी है। माननीय मंत्री जी इसका ख्याल रखेंगे और आदिवासी लोगों का विशेष रूप से ख्याल रखेंगे। बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

संसदीय कार्य मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री तथा जल संसाधन, नदी विकास और गंगा संरक्षण मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री अर्जुन राम मेघवाल): महोदय, यह बिल चल रहा है, हमारी रिक्वेस्ट है कि हाउस का सेंस ले लिया जाये और जब तक यह बिल पूरा नहीं होता है, तब तक हाउस का टाइम बढ़ा दिया जाए।

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Only four Members are yet to speak on this Bill and then after the Minister's reply, this Bill can be passed. So, if the House agrees, the sitting of the House can be extended till the Bill is passed.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. So, the sitting of the House is extended till the Bill is passed.

SHRI SIRAJUDDIN AJMAL (BARPETA): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak on the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017. I appreciate the Government for introducing this Bill in which Section 2 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 would be amended so as to omit bamboo from the definition of tree.

Sir, many Members have said a lot of things about bamboo. I would like to say something different. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister and the Government of India to another very important resource that is being profusely grown by the people of Assam and the entire Northeast. It is grown in home streets there. It is called *Aquilaria Agallocha* or *Aquilaria malaccensis*. This is one of the most remunerative plantation and the people of Gulf, Japan and China value it very highly. It grows like mushroom in the entire Northeast. So it does not need any extra effort to grow this *agarwood*. Just like bamboo, the people of Assam and the entire Northeast grow *agarwood* as cash crop. In a survey conducted by the Assam Forest Department in 2004, 10 million trees are available in home streets and there are no *agarwood* in forests.

Sir, people plan their children's education and marriage on *agarwood*. It is their belief. The Assam Forest Department has stated in its various reports that *agarwood* is not found in the reserve forests of Assam. So, it will not be, in any way, detrimental to environment. People are growing *agarwood* in their own land. *Agarwood* can be put under plantation and agricultural products.

The rules pertaining to *agarwood* presently in Assam, Northeast and everywhere is very harsh. The process itself is a punishment. So, if these rules are made simpler and this industry is opened up, it will not only create jobs for millions but also it will earn millions in foreign exchange and also millions for the State of Assam and the entire Northeast.

The Union Government and the respective State Governments of the North Eastern States must ensure incentives to the growers of *agarwood* because it is grown on private lands. If the Government gives support to the growers, its trade can flourish manifold. I would like to make some humble suggestions. The Central Government should bring about necessary amendments in the Schedule of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 or the Appendix-I of the same. The Government should also relax rules for export licensing so that people cultivating *agarwood* would get the benefit, the State Government would also benefit by collecting revenues and the country will get much needed foreign exchange. If this is done, the people of Assam and the entire Northeast would be very grateful to the hon. Minister. So, I request the Minister to kindly look into this matter.

श्री कौशलेन्द्र कुमार (नालंदा) : माननीय उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, आपने वन (संशोधन) विधेयक, 2017 पर चर्चा में भाग लेने का मौका दिया, इसके लिए बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

सबसे पहले मैं माननीय मंत्री जी को धन्यवाद देता हूँ कि वे यह बिल लाए। सरकार भारतीय वन अधिनियम, 1927 में एक संशोधन कर रही है। बांस अब वृक्ष नहीं कहलाएगा। यह बहुत ही अच्छा कदम है। इस कानून के कारण देश के कई भागों में लोगों को काफी परेशानी होती थी। उन्हें बांस की कटाई पर जेल तक की सजा दी जाती थी, वे अपराधी घोषित कर दिए जाते थे। आज भी, विशेषकर छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य में इसके कारण काफी लोगों पर अब तक कानूनी कार्रवाई चल रही है। सरकार इन सभी बाधाओं और बांस का अन्तरराज्यीय आवागमन सुचारू रूप से चले, इसके लिए अध्यादेश भी ला चुकी है। अब इसे कानूनी मान्यता मिल जाएगी।

महोदय, मैं बिहार राज्य से आता हूँ। अभी सुनील भाई ने विस्तार से इस विधेयक पर चर्चा की है। बिहार में बांस काफी मात्रा में पाया जाता है। हमारे साथियों ने भी कहा है कि बिहार में हर घर में लोग उसे घरेलू उपयोग में लाते हैं। वे उसकी दौरी, खोमा बनाते हैं। खासकर, छठ पूजा में बांस से बने सूप पर ही अर्घ्य दी जाती है। बिहार में बांस को लोग धार्मिक महत्व का मानते हैं। किसी के मरने के बाद भी बांस से ही रंथी बनाकर लोग उसे ले जाते हैं। बांस को लोग धार्मिक रूप से पवित्र मानते हैं। मैं आशा करता हूँ कि बांस की खेती को बढ़ावा भी मिलेगा। माननीय प्रधान मंत्री जी की जो सोच है कि हम वषेन 2022 तक किसानों की आमदनी को दोगुना करेंगे, तो जो छोटे-छोटे किसान हैं, इस बिल के कारण उनको राहत मिलेगी।

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member, please conclude.

... (Interruptions)

श्री कौशलेन्द्र कुमार : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं अपनी बात दो मिनट में समाप्त करूँगा। मैं सरकार से आग्रह करना चाहता हूँ कि बांस के व्यावसायीकरण पर कोई नीति बनाए। इससे पहले बांस को पेपर मिल्स खरीदते थे, पर अब किसानों को वह लाभ नहीं मिल पा रहा है, क्योंकि अब कोई पेपर मिल्स बांस नहीं खरीदते हैं। अतः इस पर विचार करने की आवश्यकता है।...(व्यवधान)

श्री राजेश रंजन (मधेपुरा) : उपाध्यक्ष जी, धन्यवाद। मैं पॉइंटवाइज ही कहूंगा। जल, जंगल और जमीन पर लगभग उद्योगपतियों, पूंजीपतियों का कब्जा है। इस भारत देश में 30 करोड़ लोगों के पास एक डेसिमल ज़मीन नहीं है और लगभग बीस करोड़ लोग भूखे सोते हैं। मात्र लगभग दस करोड़ लोग किसान हैं। उसके बाद या तो बंटाईदार हैं या दिहाड़ी मज़दूर हैं। आप किसानों की बात करते हैं। आम लोगों की जो परंपरागत खेती है या परंपरागत व्यापार है या खेती पर आधारित उसकी जो सम्पदा है, वह लगभग पूंजीपतियों के हाथों में जा चुकी है। आप अध्यादेश ला रहे हैं, पर किसी ऐसी खेती को ले लीजिए, चाहे आप सब्जी को ले लीजिए या किसी चीज को ले लीजिए, यह बाबाओं के हाथों में है, पूंजीपतियों के हाथों में है। मैं आप से बड़ी विनम्रता के साथ पूछना चाहूंगा कि आप किसानों को कैसे बेनेफिट देना चाहते हैं?

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please mention the relevant points.

... (Interruptions)

श्री राजेश रंजन : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं उसी के विषय में कह रहा हूँ।

जहां मैं अपनी खेती के लागत मूल्यों का दाम खुद नहीं लगा पाता हूँ और उसे कोई पूंजीपति या व्यापारी लगाता है। मैं पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों की बात कहता हूँ।

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं दो पॉइंट्स कहकर अपनी बात खत्म करूंगा। बिहार का जो इलाका है, जो कोसी का इलाका है, जो सबसे ज्यादा बाढ़ पीड़ित इलाका है, और जो पूर्वोत्तर का इलाका है, वहां का किसान बांस की खेती पर सबसे ज्यादा निर्भर है। मैं कह रहा हूँ कि यदि आप बांस को डेवलप करना चाहते हैं तो उस पर आधारित उद्योगों को लगाएं।

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member, you are not speaking on the Bill. Please conclude.

... (Interruptions)

श्री राजेश रंजन : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं बैम्बू पर ही बात कर रहा हूँ।...(व्यवधान) मैं कह रहा हूँ कि आज जो सरकार उसको किसान पर आधारित करके डेवलप करना चाहती है तो किसान तो अपने लागत मूल्य का दाम तक लगा नहीं सकता। दूसरी बात है कि जहां बांस की खेती होती है, चाहे बिहार हो, चाहे असम हो, चाहे झारखण्ड हो, वहां आप जब तक बांस पर आधारित उद्योग नहीं लगाएंगे, तब तक यह डेवलप नहीं होगा। उस पर आधारित चीज, जैसे कागज है या अन्य चीजें हैं, उन पर ध्यान दीजिए। जैसे बांस के कोपर में जो गुच्छी होती है, उसकी सब्जी बनती है। वह गुच्छी की सब्जी फाइव-स्टार होटलों में पांच हजार रुपये में मिलती है, लेकिन किसानों को उसके लिए कितना मिलता है? उसके लिए किसानों को मात्र एक रुपया मिलता है। एक रुपये की मकई मॉल्स में छः सौ रुपये में मिलती है।

मेरा कहना है कि बांस के किसानों को अगर आप आगे बढ़ाना चाहते हैं तो जहां इसका प्रोडक्शन होता है, वहां आप उस पर आधारित उद्योगों को लगाएं, ताकि किसानों को इसका बेनेफिट मिले। लेकिन, देश में किसान नहीं बचा है। मेरा यह कहना है। इससे ज्यादा मुझे कुछ नहीं कहना है।

ADV. JOICE GEORGE (IDUKKI): Thank you, Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me an opportunity to participate in the discussion on the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017. While reading the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Act, the objective is very laudable, rather. But, due to paucity of time, I subscribe to the views expressed by my learned friend Mr. Premachandran as regards the ordinance, the way in which the Bill has been brought in as an ordinance.

Coming to the Bill, as rightly pointed out by the Minister during his introductory speech, as per the forest policy, our forest cover has to be increased from 24 per cent now in existence to 33 per cent. For that, we will have to expand our green cover in the non-forest areas, in the agrarian farmlands etc. But, the purpose of this amendment is to exclude or, rather omit, the word 'bamboo' from the definition of trees as per clause (7) of Section 2 of the Indian Forest Act. When we read Section 2, sub-clause (4), 'tree' includes all the plants. But, I think, sub-clause (ii) is very important. Plants not being trees (including grass, creepers, reeds and moss), and all parts or produce of such plants are being treated as forest produces under Section 2, sub-clause (4) (ii) of the Indian Forest Act. By this enactment, the Government intends to take out 'bamboo' from the definition of trees. But, the amendment will not serve the purpose because, as we know, each and every State Government has got their own Forest Act. This matter is included in the Concurrent List and every State is having their own transit rules for forest produces also. It is because, grass is also included as a forest produce as per Section 2, sub-clause 4 of the Indian Forest Act. Still this being a grass, as rightly pointed out by the Minister in his introductory speech, what purpose is going to be served by this enactment by only, simply bringing out the word 'bamboo' from the definition of tree? This is one point.

Another point as regards this Act is this. We have the Indian Forest Act, 1927. Of course, we have the Indian Forest Policy Rules, 1952. In that Forest Policy Rules, unfortunately we have subscribed to the entire views of the British era and we are continuing with it. We have the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 too. On the basis of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, many of the learned Members have pointed out the Supreme Court judgement in Godavarman Thirumulpad case. In Godavarman Thirumulpad case, the Supreme Court is issuing directions after directions for implementation of the Forest Conservation Act. Many of those directions are not served considering the ground reality and ground rules. So, it is for the Parliament to enact rules. In this regard, if we want to expand the forest cover in India, we will have to simplify certain rules as regards transit and cutting of trees which are being grown by farmers in their land. Now the unfortunate thing is that nobody is permitted to cut and remove the trees which they have planted in their property. Thereby, people are not cultivating trees in their land. If we want to increase the green cover, we will have to promote tree growth in the non-forest areas, in farmlands. For that, we will have to incentivise the farmers to grow trees in their land. For that, we will have to permit them to cut and remove the trees planted in their land. Only then, can we improve the forest growth in land. I urge upon the Government to have some policy on that issue for the purpose of promoting tree growth in non-forest areas, not only bamboo, but

also all other tree growth. There should be some regulations, restrictions incentivising the persons who are cultivating them.

With these words, I conclude. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the time of introduction of the Bill, I had raised certain objections and the Minister said that I should understand the spirit of the Bill. I have two specific questions to ask. When he will be replying to the debate today, I would request him to answer these two questions. There are a number of questions that have been posed. I am not repeating those questions. There is a variety of bamboos.

On 25th July, 2017, a letter was sent by the Inspector General of Forest (Forest Policy) from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to two respective State Governments asking their opinion because the proposal to amend sub-section 7 of Section 2 under Chapter-I of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 is under consideration of the Ministry. The question was this. What would you say to these proposed amendments? I would like to understand from the Minister as to how many State Governments have responded to this proposal and how many State Governments have supported your proposal. Who are those State Governments who have said that we are not in favour of this amendment? This needs to be told. As far as I could understand, this is in the Concurrent List. In that respect, you sought the opinion of the respective State Governments and also as very rightly you have asked in last July and letters had been sent from the Ministry to understand the view of the respective State Governments. So, I would like to understand whether the State Governments were taken into confidence while promulgating an Ordinance, what was the urgency or whatever was behind it and whether the State Governments were in support of this so that the matter would be more clear.

My second question is this. There are two specific categories which are being defined in your Bill that to encourage private cultivators or farmers to go in for large scale plantation of bamboo which can be used for commercial use or sale which can be transported from one State to another. It is a different matter. Of course, that question has already been posed that why you are withdrawing the power of the respective States and the permission that was supposed to be given by the respective States. The Government feels that it restricts the commercial nature of bamboo because of its transport. Some Members also mentioned that rent-seeking people also try to impose a different type of tax. That is why, the rate of the bamboo also goes up. But my specific question is this. There are two stages in which bamboo is being cultivated. The predominant species in the forest, especially in Odisha is *Salia*. I studied botany in my eighth class. After that, of course, Doctor *saab* might have studied it up to plus two and after that, he went into medical profession. I think *Dendrocalamus strictus*, is the botanical name of bamboos which are largely available throughout our State. In Odisha, we have bamboo cultivation, that is *Salia*, in Odisha itself in more than 14000 square kilometres. The species of bamboo

preferred by private growers are generally restricted to Sunari but Sundarkani (*Bambusa nutans*), Badi baunsa (*Bambusa vulgaris*) and Bolangi bounsa (*Bambusa tulda*) are preferred in private land. We need it to thatch our houses. We need it to have enclosures and we also need it to have walls in our mud houses. We also need as it was being told by Mr. P.D. Rai to build bridges across the streams, if not across the canals.

Why did you not distinguish what type of bamboo will be covered in this? By having a blanket freedom of transport of bamboo, there is an apprehension. My question would be this. Do you not see that in large quantity, the whole forests also will get depleted? We face in Odisha, even in Jharkhand and even in certain parts of North-East, there is a man - animal conflict.

Within five years, if all the bamboos will be depleted in forests, again, perhaps, if your Government still continues, it will come back to this House as to how to protect the bamboos in the forests. That is the basic question. Therefore, my question is: how are you going to avoid this man-animal conflict?

There is another thing because of the laws. You are heading the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Respective States have different laws. We also have our own law. It is the Vana Suraksha Samiti which protects this asset. The permission is given by the Grama Sabha to transport the forest produce from one place to another. It is not only the State Government. But by having this blanket provision that yes, it can be transported just to favour the traders, are you not trampling into the power of the Vana Suraksha Samiti? Leave aside the States. The Vana Suraksha Samiti has been empowered to protect the forests. The Grama Sabhas or the Gram Panchayats are being empowered to protect the forests. This needs to be considered. Is the Government going to consider this demand or not?

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now, the hon. Minister.

...(Interruptions)

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will call you afterwards, please. I will call you at the third reading stage. Please sit down. Please go to your seat. First, you go to your seat.

...(Interruptions)

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I will call you. Nothing will go on record.

...(Interruptions)... *

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will allow you to speak.

Shri Ramesh Bidhuri, you have to understand it. I will be allowing you to raise your question at the third reading stage. Why are you taking this time? Nothing of what you said will go on record.

...(Interruptions)...*

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will call you at the third reading stage. At that time, whatever question you want to ask, you raise it.

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES AND MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (DR. HARSH VARDHAN) : Thanks to all of you, and more particularly, more than a dozen of my friends from all corners of this august House have contributed with significant suggestions. Some have supported it. Some have supported this Bill blindly. Some have opposed it blindly. Some have expressed apprehensions. Some have raised doubts about the sincerity and the honesty and the truthfulness of the Government, etc.

Sir, before I answer all those apprehensions that have been expressed, I will continue from where I left because, first, all of us have to appreciate and understand--and even at the cost of repetition I will say-- that why we have brought this amendment. I spoke about the various uses of bamboo. I mentioned a couple of things. But I think many of our friends added a lot more to that huge list. I spoke about the economic impact which we have been deprived of. I spoke about the problems that the poor farmers and the tribal people, etc., are facing. I spoke about the fact that in spite of having the largest area where we cultivate bamboo in the whole world and being the second richest after China in terms of our genetic strength in bamboo, we are still not able to live up to the expectations and our people are still suffering a lot.

Though I have already said it, I, even at the cost of repetition, would like to repeat it once again that it was the difficulties which the people were facing that ultimately forced this Government to come up with this amendment Bill.

I would also like to tell you that this is not a one-day exercise. It is not that on a particular day the Government decided and thought to take it to the Cabinet and converted it into an Ordinance. I will tell you in the chronological order as to how the things started. It started when the party of the hon. Member was in power, though today it is on the other side of the House.

There were problems which all of us were facing. Everybody was supposed to take permission for felling and transit of bamboo trees. There is a bureaucracy and everybody knows as to what the role of bureaucracy is. There has been an inspector raj. We also know that forestry is in the Concurrent List. There is no doubt about it. We also know that since the time of the Britishers we are having the command and control mindset, which, in fact, is there even after 70 years of our Independence and people continue to suffer from it.

Then, different States in our country have different rules in this regard. It does not seem that they do not have the freedom to frame their rules. It is often found that neighbouring States have different

sets of rules, which make the problem of transit of bamboo much more complex. First, you take permission from one place. You enter into another State where you have another activity to perform and for it you take different permission. Then, you enter into another State where you have another sets of rules and you are again asked to take permission under those rules. So, the basic issue, which has been, in fact, disturbing everyone for quite sometime is that there is a need for some sort of harmony in the transit and harvesting mechanism. There were some rules, which were needed. Therefore, we had to bring this felling and transport mechanism out of Government's control and make things easier for the people of our country.

As I said earlier, bamboo is the poor man's timber. I have already mentioned about its multiple usages. As far as its consumption is concerned, you can see its widespread usage – 35 per cent of bamboo is used in pulp, 20 per cent in housing, 20 per cent bamboo is used in rural areas, 5 per cent for non-residential purposes, 8.5 per cent for fuel, 5 per cent for packing, 2.5 per cent for wood based activities, one per cent for furniture and 3 per cent for other activities.

Keeping its need in view, we have to import a major share of bamboo from outside. Then, we also noticed that income of the farmers is not growing at all. We also need to remind ourselves that our hon. Prime Minister has a very, very ambitious target of doubling the income of the farmers by 2022. Then, there was no incentive for growing bamboo in non-forest areas and they also have to face all these troubles. So, these are the issues which we all have been facing for long.

Again, I wish to repeat that the current demand of bamboo in India is 20 million tons. Out of it, only half of it is available in India. Though we share 19 per cent of the total bamboo cultivating area in the world, in contrast to that our market share is only 6 per cent.

Then, if we look at the import and export situation, we find that the export is just about Rs.32 lakh whereas the import is Rs.213.65 crore. This is the difference between what we import on this front and what we export. So, there was a dire need to do something concrete in this regard. It is not about only talking but about doing something concrete, which can actually bring a change. It does not mean that if people have been suffering for 70 years, they have to continue suffering even under Narendra Modiji's regime.

In last three years, we have tried to diagnose the smallest of issues in this country with meticulous precision, we have tried to evolve solutions to them, we have converted those solutions into programmes and we have then started implementing those programmes. Then, there is a Prime Minister who monitors the implementation of the programmes every month in a Cabinet meeting which lasts for not less than five to six hours. This country has never seen a Prime Minister like Narendra Modi. So, nobody should have the wisdom to doubt the intention of this Government.

Then, I will give you the statistics about the Chief Ministers and all. It is not only our officers who have written to the Chief Ministers, even I have also personally written to all the Chief Ministers to

request them to remove all hurdles for the people of India in the State laws. We have started meeting even the State people individually now. We have requested them that they should stop taking the royalties so that we can improve the overall ground situation. Then, I will tell you that of these 26 States, how many are supporting and how many are opposing. Later on, I will give you all the names.

I want to tell you once again about the socio-economic and the cultural benefits in the rural areas. The promotion of cultivation of bamboo trees on forest land is increasing the income of farmers. Legal and regulatory hardships are going to be removed and crores of farmers are going to be benefited. Small and large scale industries dependent on bamboo are going to be strengthened. It means 20 million people are going to be benefited further. There will be creation of new jobs. I told in the beginning that one tonne of bamboo means 350 mandays. The poor forest-dwellers are going to be employed in a big way.

Then, I talk about the ecological benefits of this whole activity which we are trying to ease out – strengthening of the soil, moisture conservation, landslide prevention and rehabilitation. My friend, Shri Premachandran also referred to them. This will also help the wildlife habitat. This will be helping the elephants and bears. It is a good source of biomass. Recently, under the Department of Science and Technology, we have put up a plant in Kashipur where we convert ten tonnes of biomass into 3,000 litres of 2G ethanol within 24 hours and that is the most successful experiment in the world. There are only four or five plants in the whole world and ours is running most successfully.

Then, there is promotion of bamboo-based handicrafts. We are strengthening the livelihood opportunities of traditional artisans and tribal people. Then, we want to improve this sense amongst the people that it is their land and it is their tree. Somebody very rightly mentioned about it that you should have the freedom and the right to grow your bamboo tree in your house and you should be able to cut it in the non-forest area. Of course, there will be improvement in the bamboo based culture, especially for the people in the North-East where there is lot of involvement of bamboo in the religious functions also.

Then, I want to mention about the environment and the ecosystem services. It would result in improving the green cover. It is the need of the hour. It is the order of the day that everybody all over the world is talking about climate change, improving forest cover and global warming. If encouraged on non-forest land, it is certainly going to improve the green cover, which is one of the major things that I talked about in the initial stages when I said that this is the mandate of the Forest Policy of 1988 and we wish to accomplish it successfully.

Then, it controls soil erosion and helps in soil moisture retention. It also helps in litter decomposition in a big way. The fast growing species of bamboo will help in the cause of climate change by absorption of carbon dioxide at a higher rate. All this is scientific; nothing in unscientific in whatever I am saying. Then, there will be increased carbon sequestration. It helps in achieving the

nationally determined contributions. In spite of the fact that our *per capita* emissions are one-third of the global average, our emissions in terms of our nationally determined contributions, or what we are going to contribute to this whole world, are such that everyone in the world praises Narendra Modi at every international forum. I have seen that in Germany, in America and in China. Everywhere everybody talks about it. It is because we are truly committed to the cause. It is good to use, and we know that it is a carbon-neutral thing.

I also wish to mention about the bio-energy sector, which is a fast-growing sector. Bamboo contributes immensely to bio-ethanol production from bamboo blending and fossil fuel. This is an important thing, which was needed to be mentioned.

Of course, as far as the National Bamboo Mission in the agriculture sector is concerned, our cultivable waste land is 12.6 million hectares. We have to encourage all this cultivable waste land and also the degraded land. All this has to be done. If we keep having these hurdles, which have made people suffer for 70 years, then how can you get to this target? How can you live up to the international reputation?

There is successful inter-cropping with cowpeas, soybean, paddy, cotton, potato, wheat, etc., which you can do with bamboo. Bamboo can be used for low-cost fencing around farm lands; one can deter stray cattle; this can be useful in windbreaks; and it is a good substitute for timber.

Finally, currently, India is importing timber and allied products such as pulp, paper and furniture. In 2015, we imported 18.01 million cubic metres of timber products worth Rs. 43,000 crore. We have to appreciate what we are; where we are; and what we have to do. We cannot carry on with these figures when we have the potential, and we have the maximum land. A small change in a bit of law, which many of my colleagues mentioned, and our friend from Sikkim also said that he brought a Bill like this in 2014 as a Private Member Bill. It is very unfortunate that we are still importing bamboo stick *agarbattis* from Vietnam. What are we doing in 2017? It saves us valuable foreign exchange, and bamboo is helping us in increasing supply of wood substitutes, and increasing supply of raw materials to the traditional craftsman of rural India and bamboo-based paper pulp industry. It is also boosting cottage industry, furniture-making units, fabric-making units and incense stick making.

Bamboo facilitates inter-State movement. It decreases the gap availability of resources from bamboo-rich and bamboo-deficient States. The North-East people are bamboo-rich, but Kerala is bamboo-deficient. I think that this is an amendment, which is ultimately going to remove this gap so that the transit is easier, and the producers and consumers are all benefited. This is in brief about it. I had mentioned this because this Bill is not about a small bamboo being removed from that definition of tree. These are the big perspectives around which the whole thing is revolving.

Now, I come to the answers to the various apprehensions that have been raised here. Regarding this Ordinance thing, I will tell you in chronological order as to when the whole thing started. An

advisory was issued on 14 May 2013, and we were not in power at that time in this country. It was issued to all the States and UTs to consider for relaxing the transit and felling regime on bamboo grown on private land. This happened in May 2013. ... (*Interruptions*) Sir, I will answer every question that has been asked. I have huge amount of respect for you. Please let me complete. I will answer all your queries.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB : Odisha did it for private land in 1999.

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: I do not know, I was not here in 1999. But I will answer everything that is in my knowledge. If there is something which is not in my knowledge, I will express apologies and maybe will answer that later on, I will send you a written reply to that.

Sir, after we came to power, following upon that advisory, we issued guidelines dated 18th November 2014 to all States and UTs to consider relaxing regulatory regime of tree species including bamboo grown on non-forest land. A lot of people have expressed apprehensions that this is about the forest land. The whole thing is about the non-forest land. It is not disturbing anything in the forest. For the apprehensions that are expressed as to what is going to happen etc., I have got answers.

Then, advisory dated 19th May, 2017 was issued to all States and UTs to consider exempting setting up bamboo units from the requirement of NOC/licence. This is all happening to make things easier for people. Then again, advisory dated 13th June, 2017 was issued to all States and UTs to consider exempting royalty on bamboo, which I referred to, and its finished products. Then, clarification dated 7th July, 2017 was issued to all States and UTs regarding exemption of bamboo from licensing. Then, wood-based industry guidelines have been amended and notified on 12th September, 2017. These amendments have further liberalized setting up of saw-mills using bamboo and species grown under agro-forestry. This would encourage setting up of processing units and generate demand for raw material leading to planting of trees on non-forest land. This probably answers one of the issues that were raised as to what we are doing to promote bamboo.

Advisory dated 6th of October, 2017 was issued to all States and UTs to consider that commonly grown agro-forestry tree species to be exempted from the requirement of the felling and transit permits. Then, advisory dated 9th October, 2017 was issued to all States and UTs regarding issuing of a pan-India transit permit for inter-State movement of bamboo. This is how consistently we have been following this issue just because we have a concern for these people who are continuing to suffer for 70 years.

On 25th November, 2017, the Indian Forest Amendment Ordinance has been promulgated for omission of word bamboo from the definition of trees. Then, advisory dated 30th November, 2017 was issued to all States/UTs to consider distribution of good quality seedlings of common agro-forestry

species to farmers and interested persons. Then the State Governments have also been requested vide D.O. letter dated 4th December, 2017 to consider to bring in appropriate amendment in their respective acts in line with changes in the Indian Forests Act, 1927 brought by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change for omission of word bamboo from the definition of trees. This will bring uniformity about legal position of bamboo across the country and help in the promotion of bamboo sector from cultivation to economic use on non-forest land by various stakeholders.

As regards consultation with the State Forest Departments, Central Department and the Ministries, 20 States and UTs responded on the proposal of removal of bamboo from the definition of trees. This is slightly older information, so the number may have improved now. Mizoram, Bihar, Punjab, Goa, Nagaland, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Karnataka, Telangana, Manipur, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh are those States. Twelve States and Union Territories have supported the proposal. They are Mizoram, Punjab, Goa, Nagaland, Karnataka, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh. Five States which have opposed the proposed amendment regarding removal of bamboo from the definition of tree include Rajasthan, Bihar, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Every State is being persuaded at a personal and at an official level further. Three States have given no specific comments. They are Telangana, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. There are a few States which have not responded. Thirteen Ministries and Departments of the Government of India including NITI Aayog have gone through the proposal in great detail and they have approved it.

Coming to the urgency, I think much of it has been answered. It started in 2013. We have communicated with various States. We have issued advisories. We are a net importer of bamboo in spite of highest bamboo covered land draining our foreign exchange. So, is it not an emergency to do something concrete?

The National Bamboo Mission is being restructured and it is soon going to be launched in a big way for effective implementation and prior preparedness of the success of the Mission. Why should we control and regulate the poor man's timber and deprive them of the benefits that accrue to them from it?

The provision of the definition of bamboo as a tree is a big hindrance to economic benefits. The Panchayati Raj Ministry and the Tribal Affairs Ministry have been pursuing it for several years but due to various technical reasons it could not happen. It has been going on since the previous Government's era but we cannot deprive the farmers of their benefits. If something was not achieved during previous regimes it does not stop Shri Narendra Modi from achieving it now.

Be assured that our Government is only for the welfare of people. We are not a corrupt Government. We believe in 500 per cent transparency. Everything is on record; everything is open; and everything can be seen.

I mentioned that there is a need to remove this command and control regime. Several permissions for cutting, transport, etc., were acting as major hindrances in cultivation of bamboo. India has become a net importer. You mentioned how to handle all this in the forest and all. You have the technology; you have surveillance; you have the satellite images; and there is effective monitoring. These can all ensure that forests are protected. Be assured about that. We will be the last people in this world to leave our forests unprotected. Be assured about that.

Shri Premachandran, it is not all about forestry to non-forestry activity. Do we ever think of controlling farm land or agricultural land for growing bamboo? We are not going to allow cutting of bamboo inside the forest. Bamboo inside the forest will still be regulated and protected as per the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the bamboo inside the forest will continue to be a forest produce inside the forest under the provisions of section 2 (4) (ii) which includes grass and hence the apprehension is unnecessary. Be assured.

I know, you have to raise something or the other. I am a great admirer of yours. You read a lot, you study a lot, and you bring out things in detail. I have learnt many things from you. The way you read things is a lesson for everyone, but you may not be correct every time. You have every right to raise an apprehension. But, if you genuinely feel that your apprehension was misplaced, please drop it from your mind once for all.

This Bill will only be for doing away with the requirement of selling and transit permit for bamboo grown on private land outside the forest. Then, you have said as to why there is urgency. I have been to these meetings in Germany and other places and I have seen how urgent it is for everything to be done. Those things which are waiting for 90 years, why should you delay them even for a day? You have been following this issue since May 2013. So, the day it matures, why should we wait?

India is committed to achieve nationally and determined contributions, that is, 2.5 to 3 billion additional carbon sequestration. This proposed amendment will help immensely when India and the entire world are concerned for climate change challenges. The Ministry of Agriculture is planning to promote bamboo cultivation in a big way under the restructured National Bamboo Mission. For that, it should be anchored urgently with enabling environmental and policy regime for success of this scheme. This will immediately remove the concerns and hardships of the farmers. There was an issue raised about bamboo being used for housing. So, I may inform my hon. Member Shri Hari that bamboo is being used in housing under the Indira Awaas Yojana and special policy organisations like Coir Board and all. We already have a National Bamboo Mission and this proposed amendment will help in speedy implementation. Then, Smt. Poddar also raised some issues. She is probably not here. We have already taken up that issue with the States. I have already told you that we have written to the Chief Ministers and we had meetings with the PCCH and the States for removing difficulties. The hon. Member also spoke about the importance, difficulties and also covered the need for urgency to come out of regulatory regime. My dear Tathagata Ji raised a couple of issues. Some of them have already been replied. Only

11 States have their own Forest Act and most of them have agreed to amend their provisions too. Around 26 States have Indian Forest Act and hence, most part of India will be immediately benefited. They have already supported it. This is just for your information. Then, you asked as to how forest guards will ensure that the bamboo transported in trucks is from the forest. All forest entries have check posts. Technology and surveillance are the order of the day. These days we are living in the 21st century with the latest science and technology at our disposal. The bureaucratic inability to check should not deprive the poor of their rights to grow, cut and sell.

Shri Jithender Ji also mentioned a few things. Only by defining bamboo from tree to grass will not suffice. I have to tell him that under the National Bamboo Mission, one lakh hectare area is proposed to be planted with bamboo in the next three years. It is not only this amendment, but we also have a prospective plan with us on which all our Departments are working closely with synergy. Post-harvest, complete value chain mechanism, skill development and capacity building, market networking and linkages, e-agri markets, tool development and harvest processing, setting up of tissue culture and nursery development, value addition, product development, etc., are already planned. These are the things, which I have mentioned, are already planned under the National Bamboo Mission.

The second question he raised was about the proposed Amendment Bill. This proposed Amendment Bill will ease the provisions and remove the confusion between the two Acts, that is, the Indian Forest Act and the Forest Rights Act. Then, there was some issued raised by our friend from Jharkhand. ... (*Interruptions*)

Sunil Ji has also mentioned that bamboo requires continuous cutting. I have also mentioned it earlier. As regards reserve forests, maybe we have to go in for surveillance. It is a brilliant suggestion to the proposed Amendment Bill. That is already being done and we will strengthen it. The proposed amendment will be beneficial.

Finally, Mr. Mahtab asked how many States have supported this. I mentioned that day that you are one of those Members for whom I have great respect because of your knowledge, sincerity and commitment.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB : You are the doctor Saheb of this House. There is another doctor Saheb in the other House.

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: As far as answer to your question is concerned, as per the latest figures, 23 States have already supported it. There are five States which have raised some objections or apprehensions. They are – Rajasthan, Bihar, Andaman and Nicobar, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. These States have a concern about felling of bamboos in forest land, etc. for which we are having one-to-one meeting and are trying to clarify that. We are not forcing anything. It is in the larger interest of the country. “Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas” is the theme with which we are working.

One Member said that blanket permission for transport will deplete the forest. I would like to say that this amendment will result in no permission for cutting trees outside forest. I think some of the things may not have been answered but I may clarify them at the personal level.

Once again I wish to tell you that this is a good Bill and time will tell this. Maybe some of us will be in this House after five years and they will appreciate that this is probably the greatest reforms of the last century that Mr. Narendra Modi thought of. Our country had to wait for Mr. Narendra Modi to come to bring about this great change in the Indian Forest Act. When I studied it, I always felt as to why such an amendment had to wait for 90 years.

I would once again repeat that ours is a Government which believes in total transparency. We believe only in *manav dharam*, *rashtra dharam* and in *samaj dharam*. We work for that and we put our head and soul into it. Our Prime Minister has given us inspiration to work with utmost sincerity, commitment, honesty and dedication for the people of this country.

With these few words, I would request all the hon. Members to now, at least, pass this Bill.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his kind words and a detailed reply as also for his good comments about the work which we have done in Parliament.

You have stated that it is a misplaced conviction. I fully agree with you. If you can convince us that it is a misplaced conviction, I am ready to correct it. I have made mainly two points. The first point was regarding Ordinance route of legislation. The Ordinance was promulgated on 23rd November, 2017 and the House was going to be summoned on 15th of December, 2017. Then what was the urgency in promulgating an Ordinance when the House was to be summoned within two weeks? That is the first question which I posed. I do not think that it is a misplaced conviction on the part of a Legislator.

The second point is regarding felling and transiting bamboo trees which are cultivated in the private land. We fully agree with the Government that all the restrictions and regulations imposed on cutting, felling and transiting of bamboos grown in the private land should be removed. We have no hesitation or opposition to that. We are fully with the farmers. But I had raised a technical question. Just now the hon. Minister has assured the House that bamboo will continue as a forest produce. I thank him for this assurance. But kindly see what is forest produce.

19.00 hours

Forest produce has been very specifically defined in clause 2(iv)(i), trees, leaves, flowers, fruits and all other parts of trees. Now, bamboo is being taken away from the purview of the definition of trees. How can then it be continued to be called a forest produce? That is the question.

The hon. Minister proposes to amend the Indian Forest Act. There is no harm in making rules and legislations. There is no restriction on growing and cultivating bamboo on private land. In my house there is bamboo. There is no restriction in cutting and transiting bamboo. If any restriction is there in any State, particularly in the North-Eastern States, we can make legislation for those States. But still I could not get convinced as to why Section 2 of the Forest Act is being amended so that bamboo is removed from the definition of 'tree'. Bush is there; even cane is there. Taxonomically cane is being termed as a 'grass' and cane is there within the purview of the definition of tree. Why bamboo alone is being taken away from the purview of the definition of tree? Without having this amendment there are enough opportunities for taking away the restrictions and regulations in felling, cutting and transiting the bamboos. Under such circumstances, what is the necessity of this legislation? That is my question.

Sir, I am not questioning the integrity and honesty of the hon. Minister. I know him personally. I admire him also. But unfortunately, in a law-making process, even a full stop, or a comma and definition have got their own ramifications. I apprehend, maybe my apprehension is wrong, that this will be misused for depleting the forest area in the country, especially the bamboo forest. That is the apprehension which I would like to place on record. With these words I conclude my speech.

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: Sir, I have explained in great detail and once again I can tell the hon. Member that bamboo will continue to be a forest produce as per clause 4(b)(ii) in forest areas and not outside forest land. The apprehension of the hon. Member is that people will misuse it inside forest. In that way, anything can happen anywhere. What is this Government for? What is this system for? What are the satellites for, what is the modern technology for? I have made it amply clear but even then I fail to understand as to why the hon. Member still has apprehensions. Outside the forest areas, once the amendment is done, it will be treated like any other agri produce. You have to appreciate the spirit of the Bill. The Bill seeks to encourage people to do this bamboo cultivation outside the forest areas. I have already explained in great detail the kind of benefits that are associated with bamboo cultivation and how much it is going to help boost our economy.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, whatever you are saying here is correct. But the apprehension of the hon. Member is this. Why are you removing bamboo from the purview of the definition of the word 'tree'? So many other trees are being cut in private cultivation. There is a provision that in private land those trees can be cut. But still those are treated as trees. But if you remove the word 'bamboo' from the category of 'tree', then the apprehension of the hon. Member is that this provision can be misused. That is what he feels. How to protect the bamboos in the forest? That is what he is asking.

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that the Government will take full care of the apprehensions expressed by him.

श्री रमेश बिधूड़ी (दक्षिण दिल्ली) : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, हमारे यहां अरावली के अंदर घास की तरह एक कीकर होता है, जब अंग्रेज़ आए थे, तो उनके बाद काँग्रेसी उसको देश के अंदर ले आए थे। ...(व्यवधान)

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: What clarification do you want to seek? You are not the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

श्री रमेश बिधूड़ी: सर, मुझे केवल तीस सैकेंड सुन लीजिए। डॉक्टर साहब से मेरा निवेदन है कि उसकी जो पत्तियां झड़ती हैं, जब वे जमीन पर पड़ जाती हैं तो परत बन जाती है और जमीन पर कलर हो जाता है और उस कीकर का पानी भी जमीन में नहीं जा पाता है। उन्हें काटते हैं तो फॉरेस्ट एक्ट के तहत उनको काटने नहीं देते हैं। उनका कोई यूज नहीं है, उन कीकरों की छाया भी नहीं होती है। मेरा डॉ० साहब से निवेदन है कि इस बिल के अंदर उनको भी कंसिडर करें, उन कीकरों के और बहुत ऑस्पेक्ट्स हैं। मेरे यहाँ 250 एकड़ के अंदर डाइवर्सिटी पार्क बना है, उस डाइवर्सिटी पार्क में वह कीकर अन्य पौधों को पैदा नहीं होने देती है। इसलिए उन कीकरों को भी इसमें ऐड कर लें उन कीकरों को भी काट सकें और फॉरेस्ट डिपार्टमेंट वाले न रोकें। यह मेरा एक कमेंट है। बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: Sir, I will give him a final clarification. If this also does not satisfy the hon. Member, then I do not know what we can do about it.

Sir, I will give you a list of things that we are going to do to prevent misuse in the forest area. Once people start growing bamboo outside the forest areas, we have to appreciate it.

Right now, why is there a pressure on the forest bamboo? It is because there are many restrictions and we do not allow people to grow them outside the forest area and if they grow them, there are many hurdles. There are inspectors everywhere and there is someone who is demanding something or other. The pressure on forest bamboo will reduce and this will further put a check on illegal cutting. We also have a long list of measures to prevent illegal cutting of bamboo inside the forests.

If you wish, I will read all of them. You will be happy to know that we are not talking in the air. We are working on the ground.

The amendment is basically only to exempt bamboo from the definition of 'tree' so that bamboo grown on non-forest/private land does not attract provisions of transit and felling regulations and at the same time, the regulation on movement of bamboo grown on forest land will still be enforceable as it will continue to be a forest produce under the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. This is the first measure.

There are adequate legal frameworks for conservation and protection of bamboo resources inside the forest areas as per the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and State Forest Acts/Rules. This is the second measure.

Thirdly, as of now, people are discouraged to take up plantation on their own land due to requirements of felling and transit which I have repeated again and again. After removal of these impediments, they will be encouraged to take up plantation/harvest for economic use. This will help in reducing their dependency on bamboo resources from forest areas and help in conservation of resources, instead of cutting of the resources.

Forest Departments are well structured. They are working under the Government system and mechanism. Being an organised sector, they have their own frontline staff, guards, rangers, etc. to protect the resources.

Harvesting of bamboo inside forest areas is carried out as per the prescribed working plan/management plan.

The bamboo species which are preferably grown by farmers and other individuals in their farm land/private land are commonly different from the bamboo species which are mostly found in the forest areas. Therefore, in case of illegal cutting from the forest areas, it could be ascertained with a reasonable practical logic.

No report has been noticed yet regarding clear axing of bamboo inside the forest areas as the nature of felling of bamboos on large scale will result in heavy volumes and it would not be easy for anyone to transport, hide or modify them instantly from the actual source of cutting.

Further, to add to this, the check post guards have the right to check and retain them on the ground in case of any doubt of the authenticity of the source and they can inspect the source of felled bamboo from simply matching the cutting edges of bamboo and sites of felled bamboo.

We have done it up with this much of meticulous precision. Gram Sabha and community participation will also help in identification of the resources. Then the State Forest Department may ask them, if needed, to get a certificate from the Gram Sabha/Headman indicating that the resources are from their own land. Then, finally with the use of advanced technology, photography, GPS registration, other innovative measures and development, self-certification will be done. There are many more things which we are in the process of developing. We will put the Ministry of Science and Technology at the disposal of the Ministry of Environment and Forest to ensure that all your concerns are addressed.

SHRI JITENDRA CHAUDHURY : I am supporting this Bill. I am not opposing it. I appreciate your initiative. You talked about the National Bamboo Mission. These bamboo resources should be put to optimal commercial use. You referred to China. They are making 1,000 billion dollars and our share, as you have mentioned, is only six per cent. Why? It is because there is no policy on how to commercially exploit these resources. Why can we not have a Bamboo Board like the Rubber Board, Spices Board, Coffee Board, and Tea Board? If there could be a Tobacco Board for tobacco, which is injurious to health, why can we not have a Bamboo Board? Unless this is done, you cannot achieve your goal.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Premachandran, are you withdrawing your Resolution?

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : No, it has already been moved.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

“That this House disapproves of the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 (Ordinance No. 6 of 2017) promulgated by the President on 23 November, 2017.”

The motion was negatived.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

“That the Bill further to amend the Indian Forest Act, 1927, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House will now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Clause 2 Interpretation clause

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Premachandran, are you moving your amendment?

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : I beg to move:

“Page 1, lines 5 and 6,--

for ‘the word “bamboos” shall be omitted’

substitute ‘for the word “bamboos”, the words “bamboos in the forest land excluding the bamboos cultivated in the land other than forest land” shall be substituted’.

The Minister has stated that bamboo means bamboo cultivated in a land other than the forest land. That is my amendment. It can be accepted. If it is accepted, the entire cloud of suspicion will go. I am moving the amendment just for the sake of record.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I shall now put amendment No. 2 to Clause 2 moved by Shri N.K. Premachandran to the vote of the House.

The amendment was put and negatived.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

“That clause 2 stands part of the Bill”.

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

Clause 3 was added to the Bill.

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

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: I beg to move:

“That the Bill be passed.”

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

“That the Bill be passed”

The motion was adopted.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet on Thursday, the 21st December, 2017 at 1100 a.m.

19.15 hours

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, December 21, 2017/Agrahayana 30, 1939 (Saka).