

Sixteenth Lok Sabha

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Title: Introduction of Indian Forests (Amendment) Bill, 2017

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES AND  
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (DR. HARSH VARDHAN):  
I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Indian Forest Act, 1927 ...  
(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER: Motion moved:

“That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Indian Forest Act, 1927.”

Bhartruhari Mahtab Ji, do you have some objection?

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Madam, this Bill tramples into powers of respective States as the Forest Act is being amended through this Bill .... (*Interruptions*). The basic provision of this Bill relates to providing permit for inter-State movement of bamboo which needs to be intact as it is there in the Forest Act. What is being done through this Bill is that there is no need for any State Government to give permission for transport of bamboo from one State to another. Very innocuously it has been mentioned that the farmers are being affected in seeking permission from their respective State Governments... (*Interruptions*). This is the basic problem because mostly it is the forest area where bamboo is grown and where permission is granted and where it is to be transported. In North-East and even in Odisha, we have the paper producing plants. There are certain States which do not have bamboo at all. For that, the respective State Government needs to give permission. How can you withdraw that power to give permission from the State Governments through this Bill so that there is free transport of bamboo from one place to another? Whom are you protecting? Whose interest are you protecting actually? You are protecting the interest of the traders and interest of the State is being put into difficulty. That is the reason why we are opposed to the introduction of this Bill... (*Interruptions*).

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: Madam, I think, the hon. Member has probably not understood the spirit of the Bill. His apprehensions are grossly misplaced. I think whatever he has communicated is not the

fact of the Bill. If he wants, I can tell him what this Bill is and what it is about. It is one of the major reforms and I think this Bill is going to help the farmers and virtually everyone in a big way.

The issue is that section 2 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, defines “tree” which includes palms, bamboos, stumps, brush-wood and canes. Therefore, the bamboo, though taxonomically a grass, is treated as tree for the purpose of the Indian Forest Act, and therefore, it attracts the requirement of transit permit under section 41 of the Indian Forest Act even if it is grown on private land.

The issue is that because of this particular definition bamboo is included under the category of ‘tree’ and there are unnecessary hurdles for everyone right from bamboo growers to those who ultimately get benefited from the bamboo industry. The whole chain starts from the farmers and includes virtually everyone.

This Bill is a major reform and it is going to help the economy in a big way. After China we are the largest grower of bamboo in the world but the benefits of bamboo economy are not being translated into action which is supposed to help the economy of the country. This country had to wait for Shri Narendra Modi, for almost 90 years, to get this Bill amended. The Indian Forest Act was enacted in 1927. Shri Mahtab is a very senior and very learned hon. Member of the House and I would like to request him to go through the provisions of the Bill and understand the spirit of the Bill. When I will talk on the Bill I will explain to him and I am sure I will be able to convince him that this is nothing anti-people and this is a pro-people and farmer-friendly Bill and it is going to help the country in a big way...*(Interruptions)*

HON. SPEAKER: The question is

“That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Indian Forest Act, 1927.”

*The motion was adopted.*

DR. HARSH VARDHAN: Madam, I introduce the Bill.

**12.18 hours**

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