

wranglings for the last several years as it has not been granted the status of a Regional Office till now, though the matter of shifting the office from Nagpur to Bhopal has been under consideration for the past many years.

The Regional Office was to be shifted immediately after re-organisation of new Madhya Pradesh in 1956 and after Bhopal was made the capital of the State, but it has not been done till now, thereby ignoring the national interests.

Madhya Pradesh is the largest State in the country, areawise. The percentage of irrigated land is far less than the national average. The farmers have to depend on rains. There are 50 research laboratories in the 45 districts of the State which transmit meteorological data to the Centre at Bhopal, but all of them are under the administrative control of the Regional Office at Nagpur, though the Nagpur Centre collects data from 8 districts only. The statistics regarding meteorology are needed not only for formulating new schemes but also by the Departments of Environment, Agriculture, Revenue of the State besides the Central Agricultural Engineering Institute and the Public Health Department, which are not available at the Centre at Bhopal.

There are five Airports in Madhya Pradesh where too the meteorological information is required.

The Prime Minister, realising the importance of meteorological information, has, in a bid to modernise the Indian Meteorological Department, amalgamated it with the Department of Science and Technology.

Therefore, the Bhopal Meteorological Centre should be immediately given the status of a Regional Office so that a big State like Madhya Pradesh may have the full benefit of the Meteorological data.

[English]

(vii) Measures needed to project and safeguard innocent people of minority Community in Gujarat

DR. G. VIJAYA RAMA RAO (Siddipet): Gujarat, the birth place of Gandhi the champion of peace and communal harmony, is today wrapped up in

violence and discord not only communal but inter-caste dividing one human from the other. There is need for applying the healing touch failing which for upholding the unity, integrity and honour of the Constitution, all possible corrective steps are needed to protect the innocent victims of weaker sections and community.

(viii) Unsafe living in coal mine areas of Rani Ganj Coalfields

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura): The coal mines areas of Raniganj coalfields are facing the danger of subsidence, gas, fire hazards etc. There are six active fire areas eight highly gassy mines and 34 dangerous and unsafe residential locations apart from 43 subsidence areas in Raniganj coal fields, which extends over 1550 square kilometres and is inhabited by 15 to 20 million people. The whole area is now facing a serious crisis due to absence of scientific mining and demographic and developmental planning. The problem is aggravated by slaughter mining practised by erstwhile private mine owners. But the scientific mining that was promised at the time of nationalisation of coal mines is still a distinct dream. The methods of mining which are being practised at present are not able to tackle the problem. On the contrary, they only aggravate it further. Further because of failure to share up the tunnels with sand and sank packing—the mines are subject to subsiding. During two centuries of coal mining in the area, the agriculture has totally faded out of existence, stagnation has become a hall-mark of industrial activities, and ecological disturbances have seriously harmed the environment of existing area.

Whatever mine development has been undertaken by the Eastern Coalfield Ltd. is not yet synchronised with the development plans of the Government of West Bengal. The result is an inordinate delay in extraction of coals, delay in completion and suffering to the people. No other economic or industrial activities are being allowed by the Eastern Coalfield Ltd., in the area. The C.M.P.D.I. does not allow completion of new roads etc. on coal-bearing land. Surface soil is, therefore, simply vanishing with no prospect of filling the void.

[*Sh. Basudeb Acharia*]

I urge upon the Government to look into the matter so that the area is freed as much as possible from the dangers of unsafe living.

15.24 hrs.

STATE FINANCIAL CORPORATIONS
(AMENDMENT) BILL

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY): Sir, on behalf of Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh, I beg to move:

“That the Bill further to amend the State Financial Corporations Act, 1951, be taken into consideration’.

As this august House is aware the State Financial Corporations—SFCs—which were conceived as Regional Development Banks constitute an important and integral part of the structure of development financing institutions in India. These Corporations contribute significantly to the growth of small and medium industries in the country. The efforts of SFCs towards nurturing the development of small and medium scale industrial units is part of the broad strategy towards dispersal of economic prosperity, greater employment generation and balanced regional development. The network of SFCs in the country covers all the States and Union territories.

In the light of the experience gained since the SFCs become operative, it has become necessary to effect certain amendments to the statute so as to remove certain restrictions which were necessary in the beginning while the SFCs were in their infant stages and which have little relevance now. The amendments which we are now proposing aim at removing the restrictive provisions so as to provide operational flexibility to the SFCs for functioning as developmental agencies. The amendments also seek to enable the SFCs to raise the maximum amount of resources consistent with normal financial prudence in order to help the SFCs to cope with the increasing demands on the resources at their disposal,

The underlying objectives and reasons for bringing this legislation before this August House have been set out in the Statement of Objects and Reasons appended to the Bill. It is, at once, evident from the Statement of Objects and Reasons that the Bill before you is a progressive piece of legislation aimed at accelerating the developmental activities of the State Financial Corporations. It will be accepted by one and all in this House that there is indeed a case for strengthening the capital base of these State Level Institutions and enabling them to augment their resources. Quite a few of the amendments proposed in the Bill arise from this objective.

The definition of an ‘industrial concern’ which may be assisted by an SFC is being expanded in the light of experience. Transport of goods and passengers by rope-way or lift would be included in the definition so that these modes of transport which cater mainly to the hilly areas can receive assistance from the SFCs. The definition would also include development, of mining, provision of weigh bridge facilities, development of industrial areas as also research and development activities relating to the specified industrial concerns.

The most welcome proposal from the point of view of the small and medium scale industrial units would doubtless be the enhancement of the borrowing limits. The existing financing limits have lost their relevance in the face of all-round cost escalations. At present, an SFC can extend assistance only to the extent of Rs. 15 lakhs to a partnership firm and 30 lakhs to companies and cooperative societies. These limits are being doubled to 30 lakhs and 60 lakhs respectively with an enabling provision that the Industrial Development Bank of India could increase these limits upto four times, in either case. The SFCs under the present statute cannot assist an industrial concern with aggregate of paid-up share capital and reserves in excess of Rupees one crore. This limit rather restricts the scope of financing of industrial concerns by the SFCs. We are, therefore, proposing to enhance the limit to Rupees three crores or such higher limit upto Rupees thirty crores as the Central Government may, by notification, specify,