

Shri C. K. Nair (Outer Delhi): Is it necessary that we should follow the conventions of other Parliaments? (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. It is not correct to say that we have made references in this House to the passing away of only Members of this House, either sitting Members or past Members of this House. So far as this matter is concerned, of course, invariably, in respect of the passing away of a Member of this House, either sitting Member or past Member, certainly, a reference ought to be made here; there is no exception made in such cases.

With respect to some others who have not been Members of this House, we have also been making references now and then.

Shri A. C. Guha: Those were cases of very distinguished Indians and a foreigner in one case.

Mr. Speaker: So far as this lady is concerned, it is common knowledge that she and her husband have tried their best to accelerate the granting of freedom, when they could have easily put it off.

Shri A. C. Guha: That is a controversial matter of history on which there is scope for difference of opinion.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. After all, on these matters, I cannot take the vote of the House before making a reference. If there has been no convention at all, and if we had not made any reference to the passing away of any other person other than a Member, then, I would have stuck to that convention. Therefore, it is a question of my discretion as to whether reference should be made in favour of a particular person or not. There can be differences of opinion. There is no such convention that we ought not to refer in such cases.

It is true that we have been making these references, even though the House of Commons might not have

made any references to our people, but we have been following a different practice here.

So far as this lady is concerned, I thought that she had been a good friend of India and she had taken active part in bringing freedom to India, and in many social activities in this country. Therefore, I thought it fit to make a reference. I am not departing from any convention.

Of course, I shall bear it in mind that normally we shall try to avoid making references to other people, except in exceptional circumstances. Now, this may pass.

12:05 hrs.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT

ALLEGED EVICTION OF 3000 DISPLACED PERSONS IN MIKIR HILLS, ASSAM.

Mr. Speaker: I have received notice of two adjournment motions. One is from Shri Hem Barua and Shri S. M. Banerjee and Shri Chintamani Panigrahi. I would like to know how this is not a State subject.

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): This is not a State subject, for, it concerns the eviction of displaced persons, some three thousand families who were living in Mikir Hills. Those people migrated to India after the Partition in 1947 and in 1950. Mikir Hills were not constituted as a separate administrative unit. It was part of a district called Nowgong district, and the Deputy Commissioner of that district gave them verbal orders to resettle there. These three thousand refugee families have converted the arid lands there into smiling paddy lands.

Now, the district council authorities of the Mikir Hills District want to evict these people. As a matter of fact, they have already started that process, and elephants are used to uproot these displaced persons from those areas. I know how sensitive the tribal people are, and I do not want to disturb their way of life. At the same time, the Government of Assam

[Shri Hem Barua]

are responsible, as much as the Central Government have a responsibility, to rehabilitate these people or to make alternative arrangements and provisions for these people. But without making any alternative arrangements and provisions for these people, they have allowed the district council authorities to use elephants in forcibly evicting these people. This would have an effect also on our food problem. They are producing paddy and they have helped to solve our food problem. Now, once again, there is a new problem of rehabilitation. That is why I want the Rehabilitation Ministry to take interest in this matter and see that these people are not evicted, unless and until separate provisions are made for these people. That is my submission.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur) rose—

Mr. Speaker: Has the Hon. Member anything to add to what has already been stated?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Yes.

In 1949, when these displaced persons came from Assam, they actually came from Noakhali. Most of them came from Noakhali after Partition, and some people came from Sylhet district. They were assured by the then Deputy Commissioner Mr. Kidwai that they would be settled in Nowgong district. In Nowgong, these areas were included in a newly formed administrative unit called the Mikir Hills and North Cachar District, an autonomous district under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and they came under the local administration of the Mikir Hills District Council.

My submission is that these three thousand refugees settled themselves there without even any help from the Rehabilitation Ministry. And they reclaimed the entire land, and the growth of paddy there is so good that

they have produced more than seven lakhs maunds annually.

Now, what is happening is that these people are being evicted. I do not want to come in between these Mikir Hills peasants and the Assam people and others. Actually, it is not only three thousand people, but their total number is about five thousand. The additional two thousand includes the Muslim minorities who came, and the Assamese people.

My submission is that this eviction action may kindly be stayed till some arrangements are made for them. Moreover, an assurance was given both by the State of Assam and by the Centre that they will be properly rehabilitated. So, my submission is that this eviction action may be stayed. It is continuing from the 7th of February, 1960, and most of the people there have been dragged. Some women have been dragged by the pulling of their hairs, and elephants have been used in this business.

I want that something should be done in this matter, and I would request the hon. Minister of Rehabilitation and the Prime Minister to come to the rescue of these three thousand displaced persons.

Shri Hem Barua: May I just add one sentence before the Minister makes his statement? Some time ago, we had the privilege of seeing the Home Minister on this matter; and the Home Minister was convinced of our arguments, and convinced of the position of the refugees there; and he was so kind and sympathetic that he told us that he would take up the matter with the Chief Minister of the State of Assam, and he would try; and possibly, he has done it. In spite of that, the eviction continues, and this is a pity.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Shri G. B. Pant): Sir, the statement that I was convinced about the arguments is one of inference on the courtesy extended by me. But I did forward

the representation that was made to me to the Department concerned and also to the State concerned. That was all that I had said.

Mr. Speaker: What is the status of these people? Originally, were they inhabitants of Pakistan and did they come and settle down here?

Shri G. B. Pant: The Minister of Rehabilitation has better knowledge of these things.

The Minister of Rehabilitation and Minority Affairs (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna): According to the adjournment motion, the source of information is stated to be a discussion on 21st February 1960, that is, yesterday, with the delegation which came from Assam and memorandum submitted by them. I have no idea as to with whom this discussion was held. I have not received a copy of the representation which is alleged to have been given by these people to certain people. I have no idea about it. But I can give as much information as I can because this is not a problem which has come up before us for the first time.

These Mikir Hills are autonomous hill districts. They are governed by certain tribal laws and tribal customs. As far as I can say from memory, even in the Constitution they have been provided certain safeguards.

In the early stages, a number of displaced families went and squatted in the Mikir Hills. Five or six years ago, a census of the families was taken and at that time I think the number was anything between 400 and 500. We got in touch with the State Government, and in spite of difficulties, the then Chief Minister, Shri Bishnuram Medhi, agreed to accept them and provide them rehabilitation within the Mikir Hills.

Then there was some further squatting and the number has been steadily on the increase, so much so that a year or so ago the number was round about 700—800. But according to the latest information of the State Government which was given to me, the

number has now gone up by another 1000, that is 500 before and the number is now about 1,000 more. It is also not very clear to us whether they are all displaced persons. But when this figure was given to me by the State Government about a month or two months ago, we agreed to look into the cases of those who were displaced persons, who were eligible and whose *bona fides* could be established and who had not received any rehabilitation assistance in any other part of Assam. Unfortunately, what is happening in this region is that we give rehabilitation assistance here today; they leave that place and move to another place and then squat there. This sort of thing is going on. In the meanwhile, we received schemes for about 300 odd families and we have sanctioned those schemes or are in the process of sanctioning them. The data is that in respect of those who are eligible, we shall make every possible effort to see that they are given alternative rehabilitation, but if we go on removing them from the Mikir Hills and effort is being made to go on adding to further squatting, the process becomes indefinite and it is not possible to cope with it.

A question has also been tabled, if I remember correctly, about this and it is coming up within the next two or three days. In the last one or two days, on my own I made efforts to collect detailed information from the Government of Assam and when I am in a position to give more details to the House about this matter, I shall gladly give them. But this is the information I can give on my own personal knowledge for a number of years. It may not be correct. But I do wish to repeat that as far as the Mikir Hills are concerned, they are autonomous districts. If displaced persons are to be rehabilitated there, it can only be a small number and we cannot see that the interests of the tribals are either jeopardised or sacrificed with a view to accommodate those who have not been sponsored by us, who are unauthorised gate-crashers or squatters. In the case of those who

[Shri Mehr Chand Khanna]

are eligible, we will see what best can be done; our idea is to see that they are rehabilitated.

Shri S. M. Banerjee rose—

Mr. Speaker: I am not going to allow any further discussion. I have allowed him ample opportunity. Those persons who have been asked to go have sent in their representations. In respect of displaced persons, the hon. Minister says that on a prior occasion they took steps; as regards those who still remain to be accommodated and provided for, the hon. Minister will kindly do the needful.

Regarding those who move from one part of Assam to another part for more favourable conditions and so on, it seems clear that that is an area which belongs to the tribals, it ought to be reserved for them and no intrusion ought to be made. Certainly, they will be separated; to persons who are settled there and are displaced persons, everything that is possible so far as displaced persons are concerned, will be done. Let there be no harshness in evicting them. I do not think that anybody would do so; nor is the hon. Minister here responsible for it. The hon. Minister has also agreed to place before the House as much information as he gathers. As soon as he gets more details regarding this, he will place them on the Table of the House.

I do not think it is necessary for me to give my consent to this adjournment motion.

Shri A. C. Guha (Barasat): Can the hon. Minister give an assurance that without providing some alternative arrangement for their rehabilitation, those people who were there for about six or seven years will not be evicted forcibly through elephants and so on?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows that in respect of any person who moves from one part to another part, the hon. Minister cannot give an assurance, but with respect to displaced

persons, the hon. Minister has said that he will look into their cases.

Shri A. C. Guha: I mean only for displaced persons.

Mr. Speaker: That is all right. If they are displaced persons staying there for five or six years, he has undertaken to see that as far as possible, provision is made for them.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Those who are eligible for rehabilitation benefits and have not received any rehabilitation benefits—I am prepared to look into those cases.

REPORTED OCCUPATION OF THE SALT LAKE IN LADAKH BY CHINESE

Mr. Speaker: I have received notice of another adjournment motion from Shri Braj Raj Singh, relating to the reported occupation of the Salt Lake in Ladakh by the Chinese. What is this matter about? Is it not already covered in the previous discussions? He has said:

"It is reported by one of the foremost political parties in Jammu and Kashmir that the Salt Lake in Ladakh has been occupied by the Chinese and the local Indian population there is not getting the salt. . ."

Has there been a fresh encroachment or fresh aggression?

Shri A. M. Tariq (Jammu and Kashmir): This was denied by the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Firozabad): I want the Prime Minister to enlighten the country about the conflicting and contradictory reports emanating from the Government of India and the Government of Jammu and Kashmir. According to the report, "the people of Zanskar, who had been using salt from Chantham have been refused access to it by the Chinese military