

of Scheduled Castes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any caste, race or tribe or part of or group within any caste, race or tribe, but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall be varied by any subsequent notification." This being the Constitutional provision, there is no question of violating the Constitution. There should be categorisation of backward classes because equitable justice should be made. There are sections of people in Andhra Pradesh and other parts of the country who are feeling that even though they constitute 40 per cent, their representation in services and their representation in other categories of employment is only 15 per cent or 20 per cent.

It is only 15% or 20%. That is why there is agitation, there is violence. I am not asking the Minister to straightaway say 'Yes'. But let the Government study this entire complex issue, keeping in view the repercussions whatsoever, the request of the State Government of Andhra Pradesh and also the representations received from other communities. The National Commission of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is already going into the matter. Let the Government not foreclose the option and say 'no' to this, because it will rake up ... (Interruptions)

SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Sir,...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down now.

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: I have not taken a stand in the matter. The fact that this sparks off a debate here, which is so heated, is a forerunner. I am happy to follow any suggestion. That is the reasons why we have a National Commission. It is the duty of the National Commission to study this subject seriously and I am sure they are doing an excellent job. The moment they tell us what to do, we will be happy to do it.

श्री संघ प्रिय गौतम: सभापति महोदय, संविधान के अंदर आरक्षण की व्यवस्था अनुसूचित जाति और अनुसूचित जनजाति के लिए लिखी गई है और अनुसूचित जातियों कौन हैं, अनुसूचित जनजातियां कौन हैं, इनकी सूची राज्यवार संविधान में दी गई है। यह सही है कि कुछ जातियां शामिल की जाती हैं और कुछ जातियां निकाली जा सकती हैं, लेकिन मैं यंत्री महोदय से पूछना चाहता कि क्या अनुसूचित जाति, जनजातियों में से फिर उप जातियों के नाम पर आरक्षण देना क्या यह संवैधानिक होगा या गैर संवैधानिक होगा?

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: I don't think this question can be answered that simply.

SHRI S.R. BOMMAI: There has been an agitation in this country that reservations for SCs and STs are being enjoyed by a particular class. Particularly, the rural backward, poor Scheduled Castes are not getting the benefits. It is said that certain families have monopolised it. Therefore, a suggestion has been floated in the country, a debate is going on, that an economic criterion should be applied to Scheduled Castes, without categorising them into A,B,C, or D categories. I would like to know whether the Government will consider it.

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: This is an excellent suggestion. If it were left to a few people, perhaps it could have been done. Unfortunately, it has not been considered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Number 564.

श्री चुन्नी लाल चौधरी: माननीय सभापति जी, इसी संदर्भ में पूछना चाहता हूँ?

श्री सभापति: कौन सा है?

श्री चुन्नी लाल चौधरी: इसी आरक्षण के ऊपर है।

श्री सभापति: वह सवाल तो हो गया। अब दूसरा सवाल सामने आ गया है।

श्री चुन्नी लाल चौधरी: बहुत महत्वपूर्ण बात है।

श्री सभापति: अब सवाल हो गया।

Development of Trade in the North-Eastern region

*564. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of schemes formulated by Government for implementation during Ninth Plan in N.E. Region towards development of trade activities;

(b) the details of on-going projects including their location and present status;

(c) whether Government propose to formulate any comprehensive export-import policy for N.E. Region;

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) objective and role of Export Promotion Board and Export Promotion Council with their operational areas?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House. (See below)

Statement

(a) and (b) Following schemes are being implemented by Central Government in North east region for development of trade activities:

- (i) Under the Critical infrastructure Balance scheme two projects, namely Installation of Power Sub Station at Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP), Byrnihat and Construction of road between EPIP, Byrnihat and main road in Meghalaya, and another scheme, construction of a Composite building at Zokhawthar, Mizoram are being implemented.
- (ii) Two EPIP projects are under implementation in Assam and Meghalaya.
- (iii) Coffee Board is operating projects for extension in Nagaland, one Coffee demonstration farm in Haflong (Assam), 5 Coffee demonstration farm at Damoli (Arunachal Pradesh), Kiruphima (Nagaland), Agartala (Tripura), Kolasiv (Mizoram) and Noney (Manipur).
- (iv) Rubber Board is implementing a scheme for accelerated development of rubber plantation in the North East region
- (v) Tea Board is implementing Tea Development Scheme for the NE region under which capital subsidy is given to the growers for planting tea.
- (vi) Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority is setting up a walk-in type cold storage for perishables at Guwahati airport. Another walk-in type cold storage is to be set up at Agartala airport.

(c) and (d) A study of the export potential of North East region, including border trade has been carried out by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade on advice of Ministry of Commerce. The recommendations of the report

are being examined in consultation of all concerned with a view to finalising an export plan for the NE region.

(e) The Export Promotion Board is an administrative body under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary set up to provide policy and infrastructural support through greater coordination among Ministries concerned for boosting the growth of exports.

Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) are autonomous bodies to promote exports of a particular group of products, projects and services. They perform both advisory and executive functions for their members for promotion of exports. The main role of EPCs is to build image of Indian products abroad, to provide commercially useful information, professional advice in the matter of export promotion, to organise fairs, exhibitions etc. abroad and to build data relating to export and import, etc.

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Sir, my question has some strategic relevance. As you know 98% of the boundary of the North Eastern Region is with the neighbouring countries of Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and China. Border trade was a traditional practice of people living there. Recently, there has been an informal trade going on there. There was a study conducted by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade. The study revealed that annually items worth Rs. 2000 crores are traded informally across the North Eastern border.

My question is whether the Government will take effective steps to curb this informal trade and legalise it. I am saying this because, in the illegal trade that has been going on, there are three items involved, which are harming the country. Firstly, illegal arms are being traded. Secondly, drugs are being traded illegally through the border. Thirdly we are getting one service from across the border, that is, the training of our militants, and in return most of the essential items, that are going to the North Eastern Region for consumption by our citizens, are unofficially going into these neighbouring countries, without any revenue coming to our exchequer.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Ministry has taken any concrete steps to stop this illegal trade and legalise it so that we can have some revenue from that.

Sir, the second part of my first supplementary is, the reply of the hon. Minister indicates hardly any infrastructure developmental projects which are being proposed by the Ministry in the North-East. Sir, the North-Eastern region has been forgotten for the last fifty years, and no infrastructure has been created there. The reply of the hon. Minister narrates only a few things, like cultivation of tea and rubber in that area. We all know that cultivation of tea has been there for 100 years. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what kind of strategy they have adopted for the North-East for development of infrastructure and increasing trade from that area.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: Sir, the hon. Member has put three or four questions together. May I inform him that so far as trade between India and Bangladesh is concerned, whether it is from Bangladesh to the North-Eastern States, there is no difficulty at all because Bangladesh is a member of SAARC? But, in regard to Myanmar, there are some problems. It is not easy to legalise or legitimise the illegal trade that is going on between this area and Bangladesh. The border is very long and it is a very difficult forest area. Therefore, the Government is thinking of having a new plan to bring Bangladesh as well as Myanmar into this.

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Sir, the second part of my first supplementary was about development of infrastructure in the North-East for promoting trade activities.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: Well, Sir, it happens if the hon. Member puts three or four questions together. So far as tea is concerned, everybody knows that this area is very good for tea plantation. The Commerce Ministry has taken several steps to promote coffee cultivation and rubber cultivation in this area. There are specific schemes. If the hon. Member wants, I can give him full information. For instance, under Commerce Ministry's scheme, the Coffee Board takes up areas for development of coffee. For four years, the total expenditure is met by the Coffee Board under promotional scheme, and later on, it is handed over to the individual farmers. Similarly, in regard to infrastructure development, Sir, this

matter has been pending before the Government. Sir, several committees were appointed and when I happened to be the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, I constituted a Study Group under the chairmanship of Shri L.C. Jain who was a member of the Planning Commission. It gave a very good report, but later on, because of change in the Government, that report was, I don't know, consigned to a well. The latest report is the Shukla Report, and we are taking steps to implement the recommendations of Shukla Committee Report.

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Sir, that was the second part of my first supplementary. My second supplementary is this. In one of the replies in the Standing Committee meeting, the Commerce Secretary said that the Government has so far encouraged creation of export processing zones in the country by private participation. A suggestion was made by the Committee that since private investment in the North-Eastern region was very less or there was no private investment due to obvious reasons, whether the Ministry would consider creation of an export processing zone through Government funding so that trade and export activities can be promoted in that region.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: Sir, there are, what we call, Export Promotion Industrial Parks in some parts of the country. In the North-Eastern region, in two States, we have already started but there is some difference between the Export Promotion Zones (EPZ) and Parks. Here, it works like an industrial estate. Area is allotted to people who are interested in manufacturing exportable goods whether it is handicrafts or garments or horticultural products or agricultural products. The suggestion of the hon. Member is very good. At present, the Government does not have any proposal to start new Export Promotion Zones. It is the interested people who start it. The Government will give necessary help. Since the hon. Member has suggested, the Government will seriously consider it, whether as an exception, so that this backward area can be exposed for development if it is possible to start EPZs.

SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Sir, in the reply to question (a) and (b), part (ii), the hon. Minister

has indicated that two EPIPs are under implementation, in Assam and in Meghalaya. So far as I know, the Government of Tripura has sent a proposal to set up an EPIP project. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government would consider it as early as possible. This is Part A. Part B of my question is, in answer to (a) and (b), part (vi), it is stated that the Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority is setting up a walk-in type cold storage for perishable goods at the Guwahati Airport. Another walk in type cold-storage is to be set up at the Agartala Airport. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the time-frame within which this cold-storage would be set up at the Agartala Airport.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: Sir, I have already stated that there are two EPIP schemes: One in Meghalaya and the other one is in Guwahati. One more is under consideration in Manipur. They are being executed. Sir, in this, the Government will give ten crores of rupees or 75% of the total cost, whichever is less, to develop EPIPs. But, in regard to North-Eastern States, we have made an exception and that is the Government would meet the full expenditure, even if it is up to ten crores of rupees.

The other question the hon. Member raised is about the Guwahati Airport. It is my firm conviction that unless Guwahati Airport is raised to international level, development particularly in regard to horticulture, agriculture, readymade garments or any other exportable product is not possible. I will take up this matter with the Civil Aviation Minister so that the whole area will be exposed for development once the Guwahati Airport is raised to the international standard.

SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTDO: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know whether the Government is proposing to permit the export of fruit and fruit products to Myanmar, timber finished products to Bangladesh and direct export of tea from the Eastern region to China.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: Sir, I would like to correct my answer to the previous question in regard to Border trade. Sir, a Border Trade Agreement was signed between Myanmar and our country and border trade is

already opened at Morehs in Manipur. With regard to the question that was put just now, I would assure the hon. Member that the Government will give this matter a serious consideration.

SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is good to learn from the Minister that the Jain Commission Report was prepared when he was the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. He incidentally referred that after the change of the Government, he stopped there. I would like to know from him whether a Report is valid only for the period the man in authority remains in power. Will the hon. Minister kindly see his way to execute some of the important proposals that were included in that Report?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is a suggestion for action.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: I would entirely support this suggestion. If the Government appoints a committee or a Commission to give a report in regard to development of certain areas, particularly backward areas or backward regions, like to North-Eastern States, it should not be consigned to a limbo. It is not a personal matter. I did not appoint that Commission for my personal benefit or for the benefit of the ruling party at that time. This is a Government document. This document was produced after a considerable expense, labour and money. Normally, it should not happen. But, unfortunately, we have not established a convention in our country, is our governance that a report is a report, whether it is prepared by one Government or the other.

SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, would the hon. minister kindly clarify a doubt in my mind and that is with regard to protocol between India and Bangladesh whereby exports from Assam have to reach all the way to Calcutta before actually being exported to Bangladesh? For example, cement and limestone of Assam is in great demand in Bangladesh. But, there is difficulty in shipping it straight, let us say, from Guwahati by a river route to a port in Bangladesh. It has to come all the way to Calcutta before being sent there and this raises the cost.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: Sir, there is a very good proposal called the Asian Railway Project of ESCAP. Once this project is implemented, the whole area will be opened up. Until then we have no other course and transport has to be done mainly through river.

SHRI JAYANT MALHOUTRA: Sir, I am going to be very brief. When multinational companies are allowed an entry in the small scale industries, they are forced to export 50 or 75 per cent of their produce. But, there are some multinational companies in India which have an enormous knowhow in food processing industry and especially a company called Pepsi Cola has recently acquired the world's largest food processing company called Tropicans which has an enormous knowhow. I would like to know from the Government whether it would consider of forcing the Pepsi Cola to go and invest heavily in the North-East because by dribblets there will be no development of the North-East. In order to develop exotic fruits there, which would be exported to India and other countries by this company, this company is doing a lot of work in South America. This company has the world's largest knowhow for food processing.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: Sir, I am afraid that we cannot force any multinational or Indian company to go there and do this and do that. We will provide all facilities for such industrial units to go there, to produce and export.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Putting VSP on a Firm footing

*565. **SHRI YERRA NARAYANA-SWAMY:** Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to put Visakhapatnam Steel Plant on a firm footing;

(b) whether there is any proposal to sell part of the equity of VSP; and

(c) what steps have to be taken, in terms of technology upgradation to make Visakhapatnam Steel Plant healthy and self-sustaining alongwith full details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK): (a) yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) have appointed a reputed consultant for preparing a comprehensive revival package for RINL (Visakhapatnam Steel Plant). This will cover all aspects including technological issues.

गुजरात में इस्पात परियोजनाएं स्थापित करना

*566. **श्री अनन्तराय देवरांकर दबै:** क्या इस्पात और खान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) गुजरात में आठवीं योजना के दौरान इस्पात परियोजनाएं स्थापित करने हेतु कुल कितनी धनराशि दी गई;

(ख) उक्त धनराशि से कितनी इस्पात परियोजनाएं स्थापित की गई;

(ग) क्या परियोजनाओं की स्थापना हेतु उपलब्ध करिये गए ऋणों पर ब्याज की दर में कोई रियायत दी जा रही है; और

(घ) क्या आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में इस्पात परियोजनाएं स्थापित करने के लिए कोई प्राथमिकता दी जाती है?

इस्पात और खान मंत्री (श्री नवीन पटनायक): (क) आठवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना अवधि के दौरान गुजरात में इस्पात परियोजनाएं स्थापित करने के लिए केन्द्र सरकार अथवा गुजरात सरकार द्वारा कोई बजटीय प्रावधान नहीं किया गया था।

(ख) से (घ) उपरोक्त (क) को ध्यान में रखते हुए प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

Committee under Equal Remuneration Act

*567. **SHRI C.O. POULOSE:**
SHRI JIBON ROY:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of India have constituted a Committee under the Equal Remuneration Act;

(b) if so, the composition of the Committee and the date of last meeting of the Committee;

(c) whether Government have given an assurance to reconstitute this Committee; and

(d) if so, the steps taken by Government thereon?