

वजह से, तैयार हो गए हैं। आपको अब मेरी एक और मदद करनी है और मुझे उम्मीद है कि आप लोग मेरे साथ सहयोग करेंगे।

मुलायम सिंह यादव जी ने, डिफेंस मिनिस्टर साहब ने, एक आश्वासन इस हाउस में दिया था कि वे चायना के बारे में स्टेटमेंट देंगे। इस बारे में क्वेश्चन था और उन्होंने कहा था कि हमारी बातचीत चल रही है और मैं हाउस में आकर बोलूंगा। मगर हाउस उनको समय ही नहीं दे पायी। वह कल-परसों से कह रहे हैं कि मुझे स्टेटमेंट करना है पर हम उनको समय नहीं दे पाए। वे यहां हैं और उनको आज कहीं जाना है। मैंने उनसे कहा कि मैं हाउस की परमीशन ले लूंगा कि वे अपना स्टेटमेंट यहां हाउस के पटल पर रख दें। आप लोग उसको पढ़ लें और कल हम लोग उस पर क्लेरीफिकेशन पूछ लेंगे।

इसी तरह से हमारे होम मिनिस्टर साहब श्री इन्द्रजीत गुप्ता जी का स्टेटमेंट भी है। वह भी बड़ा इम्पोर्टेंट है और हम नहीं चाहेंगे कि उसमें डिले हो। वे खाली आज उसको रख दें, क्लेरीफिकेशन हम लोग कल समय निकाल कर कर लेंगे।

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: इन तीनों में सबसे ज्यादा इम्पोर्टेंट कौन सा है ?

उपसभापति: हमारे लिए तो सब इम्पोर्टेंट हैं, पूरा हाउस इम्पोर्टेंट है।

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: इनको एक एक करके कर दीजिए।

उपसभापति: आप स्टेटमेंट पढ़िए नहीं, खाली सभा पटल पर रख दें तो जल्दी हो जाएगा।

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER

Recent Incursion into Indian Territory In Himachal Pradesh region, by the Chinese army and the implications thereof

रक्षा मंत्री (श्री मुलायम सिंह यादव): माननीय उपसभापति महोदया, मैं चीनी सेना द्वारा हिमाचल प्रदेश के भारतीय सीमा क्षेत्र में हाल की घुसपैठ के संबंध में अपना वक्तव्य सदन के सभा पटल पर रखता हूँ।

Release of persons still under detention under the erstwhile Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act 1987, which lapsed on 23rd May, 1995

उपसभापति: शुक्रिया। हिन्दी और अंग्रेजी की दोनों कापियां बराबर डिस्ट्रीब्यूट कर दीजिये ताकि मੈम्बर रात को पढ़ कर कल आ सकें।

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA): Madam, as per your direction, I beg to lay on the Table of the House a statement on issues raised by hon. Members regarding release of persons who are still under detention under the erstwhile Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act of 1987 which lapsed on the 23rd May, 1995.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Will it be effective retrospectively or just from today? So, copies of this statement should also be distributed in both languages, Hindi and English, so that Members can read it—copies of both, the statement of the Defence Minister and the Home Minister. Now, the discussion on the Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1997 is open for discussion.

THE AQUACULTURE AUTHORITY BILL, 1997—Contd.

SHRI S.B. CHAVAN (Maharashtra): Madam, have we waived all the rules?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Today, we have waived all the rules in view of the plea which Chaturananji made and in view of the people who are going to suffer due to this. The House is being very indulgent to do this and I thank on behalf of everybody. I think, if we have so many speakers, we won't be able to finish it in one hour. So, I will have to cut down names of speakers. Dr. Gopalrao Patil.

आज तो आप भी बोल रहे हैं बी.जे.पी.की तरफ से।

डा.गोपालराव विठ्ठलराव पाटिल(महाराष्ट्र): कापसे जी बोलेंगे। समय रहा तो मैं भी तीन मिनट बोलूंगा।

उपसभापति: नहीं नहीं आप नहीं बोलिये क्योंकि हम लोगों को एक घंटे में खत्म करना है तो कैसे होगा। कापसे जी प्लीज़ आप बोलिये।

Mr. Vayalar Ravi, you are also speaking on this.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Yes, Madam.

PROF. RAM KAPSE (Maharashtra): Madam Deputy-Chairperson, today, hon. Chaturanan Mishraji introduced a Bill,

moved it for consideration and in a way, we are forced to support it immediately, but I think it will not be treated as a precedent. This is a crisis management and we are working like a fire-brigade. The judgement was delivered on 11th December, 1996 and since then three-four months have passed, the Minister should have prepared the Bill earlier and at least two days should have been given to us for study, and that would have been ideal, but we want to support it in the interest of human element which is involved in this whole affair. Hon. S.B. Chavanji enquired whether all rules have been waived. Yes, we have waived all the rules, but this is just for today and from tomorrow onwards, we expect that the U.F. Government will work in a different manner and not in a haphazard manner.

Madam, I would like to read some part of the judgement. The Supreme Court judgement has said, "All aquaculture industries, shrimp industries, shrimp culture ponds operating set up in the coastal regulation zone as defined in the CRZ Notification shall be demolished and removed before March 31, 1997." So, within ten days it needs to be demolished. Some State Governments have already started the work. In Orissa, 225 fields have already been demolished, and in many States collectors, police authorities and the people are ready to demolish.

If at all signal is given 'go ahead', then what will happen in the next week throughout the coastal shore? You can imagine that. Therefore, in the interest of humanity, we support this Bill with some reservations and some suggestions to which, I feel, Mr. Chaturanan Mishra, will definitely agree. This Bill will have far-reaching effects like the far-reaching judgement. The Bill itself will have far-reaching effects. If we take into consideration the environment of the country, we will have to be very careful. At the same time, if we demolish this aquaculture, it will lead to a great loss.

So, I would just like to give information to the House as to how much amount and men are involved in the whole affair. At present aquaculture gives employment—according to the figures given by his own Department—to three lakh people. It is much more than that because the actual labour and the other persons involved in the industry who are benefited because of this industry, their number is about 16 lakhs. As far as financial share of the Government is concerned, it is also not a small amount. The financial stakes are very high. Even in the Minister's own Department, that is, the Ministry of Agriculture, the NABARD has interest of Rs. 465 crores which has been disbursed. An amount of Rs. 1,200 crores has been given by the banks. The private finances involved are to the tune Rs. 12,00 crores and the affected area is more than 80,000 hectares. We started helping this industry from the 6th Plan period. We wanted to help the fishermen. We wanted that the aquaculture should be promoted. The Department of Agricultural Development was very happy to mention the development that was made in 1995-96 with regard to brackish water aquaculture. Paragraphs after paragraphs have been written in his own report of 1995-96. At the same time you had given land to the people. There are many States which even gave land to the people just for aquaculture. Subsidy was given. In Gujarat subsidy was given. If you wanted to promote this industry, then what came in the way of this industry and what created a problem in the Supreme Court? Their own rules of 1991 created this problem. This is a legacy that you have. In 1991, the Department of Environment and forests came with some rules with regard to environment. The Supreme Court was of the opinion that these rules were being flouted by the aquaculture industry. For this your Government has to suffer. This is the situation in which we are placed. What is the reason? The real reason is the Coastal Regulation Zone, the CRZ.

I want these rules to be studied urgently. The CRZ is creating a problem not only in aquaculture, but in many other area also.

In the 80's, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had a feeling, had a wish, that on the seashore, up to 500 metres should be a free area; whatever was to be done, whatever construction, etc., was to be done should be done beyond 500 metres. This was just a wish, but it was taken as an order by many. Then many things followed and that has created a problem in Maharashtra, especially, in Konkan. *(Interruptions)* Any comment?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No. How can anybody make any comment on such a good suggestion? It will be only appreciation.

PROF. RAM KAPSE: As I said, this was just a wish of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Actually, when the CRZ thing was started, enough care was not taken. In the case of the eastern shore and the western shore, the coastline is different. Area-wise, it differs. As far as Konkan is concerned, the valley and the sea are so nearby that the CRZ needs to be restudied and then we should go ahead, according to the needs.

Therefore, my first suggestion to the hon. Minister is this. Of course, we will pass this Bill. We will support this Bill. We do not oppose it on any count. Even if it is to be passed today itself, we would not object. At the same time, since the issues involved are so many, I would suggest that a Parliamentary Committee should be appointed by the Government—really speaking, the Committee should be appointed by Parliament itself—to go into the many issues which are involved in this.

One is environment. Madam, Mahatma Gandhiji once said that Nature had given enough to the humanity, but not enough to the greed of the humanity. Therefore, if at all we want to protect the environment, we have to work against this greed which is all-pervasive. In that

case, something needs to be done for the environment. Wherever aquaculture is creating a problem vis-a-vis environment, it should be immediately studied and ways must be found to overcome the problem.

Another problem is about the fishermen. If, because of aquaculture, the fishermen living in the coastal area are put to a loss, it would definitely be detrimental to the interests of a particular section of the society. I think this needs to be taken care of. There are some leaders of the fishermen who are saying that this aquaculture is creating a problem for them. We will have to listen to them. Mr. Thomas is there. We will have to listen to him. There are some persons in Maharashtra also. We will have to listen to them. Just as we have to take into consideration the environmental aspect, we should also take into account what these fishermen want to say. If there is any substance in their argument, the Committee should go into it in depth and then decide the matter.

While giving the judgment, the Supreme Court had opined that aquaculture was not agriculture, but an industry. Now, what is the opinion of Parliament? We have been treating this as agriculture since 1974. We have been treating this as agriculture. If the Supreme Court is of the opinion that it is an industry, we will have to study this question whether it is an industry or not. That is also a matter of concern.

Then, whether it should be small farming or big farming, that is also an issue. Whatever information I have today is that in most areas it is small farming with two hectares, three hectares, five hectares or, at the most, ten hectares. There were only two big companies which were working till 1995. They stopped working. The Government did not work in time. That has created a problem. A case was filed in the Supreme Court in 1994. An interim stay was given in 1995. Financial institutions stopped giving loans, and naturally some

industries backed out. Now, small farmers are interested in it. So, we should try to work for their betterment.

Another issue is whether MNCs should be allowed to come here. We would like to oppose big industries and big agriculturists coming in this. We support small farmers, and we should have a separate Act for them.

Then, at the same time, you mentioned about exports. If you want to promote exports, you should also look into the facilities which could be created for exports.

Now, financial assistance has been almost stopped. The last month the whole industry closed. Nobody is working there, so, this also needs to be looked into.

Again, the infrastructure facilities which need to be given also need to be looked into. We will have to work for technological advancement.

So, these are the issues. You will agree with me that these issues will not be considered by the Authority you are forming today. That is a separate job. It needs to be done. If we really study, it, if we work on the matter, naturally, whatever we will do will ultimately be beneficial to fishermen, agriculturists, industries, the nation and for exports. Ultimately, we will not be at a loss.

Therefore, though I support the Bill, if at all the Government thinks that my suggestions are worth considering, these may please be looked into.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Kapse made very good suggestions.

I have a suggestion from the Chair, Mr. Minister. We were discussing it with Dr. Biplab Dasgupta in my chamber. We have done this because of the urgency of the situation. Having done this, we would like that sometime after forming the Authority you come back to the House and discuss this matter in great detail so that Members' input could come in a

proper form which may guide both environment-protection as well as protection of the livelihood of the people and the export which is important to us.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: Madam, I associate myself with you on this.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Madam Deputy Chairman, let me begin with fully endorsing the views expressed by the Chair itself.

Madam, I am coming from a place where the writ of the Supreme Court on the Coastal Regulation Zone never runs because the sea-erosion is the order of the day. Whatever shore was fixed last year has gone already. So, it is a peculiar situation. So, I hope the Supreme Court will take this into account and give a direction to the Government of India to allot more money at least to protect the CRZ.

Madam, I support this enactment because it involves not only the employees but also big financial commitments. Banks may incur heavy losses if you completely close them down.

It is a pity. Of course, I do not want to go into or repeat what the Supreme Court has said. But, in this period of public interest litigations and the social environment concept of the judiciary, they fail to understand the agony of more than a million workers and the agony of the entrepreneurs who have taken so much of loan from banks and other financial institutions.

Madam, while you are making a separate enactment, I would submit that there is another enactment called the Marine Products Spawn Development Authority. Its Clause 9 deals with the export of the marine products. As my hon. colleague has rightly said, I also do not agree that it is an industry. It is neither industry, nor agriculture. It is a fishery meant for export. These aquacultures are not mainly for international consumption. They are purely for export. The Marine Products

Spawn Development Authority is doing not only promotion, but is having its own aquaculture. There are shrimp farms. They are supplying seeds all over the country. Everywhere they are giving knowhow, technology and financial assistance. So, even an amendment to Clause 9 and the saving clause in the C.R. Zone, would not serve the purpose. Anyhow, this is only my suggestion.

The only point that I am making is that we are creating a new institution. That institution also can be a little more transparent and accessible to the entrepreneurs. Here at page 5, clause 10, you are saying a licence for every aquaculture farm will be issued. It is good, because there must be some kind of a regulation. But that regulation under this authority is going to be concerned with another institution. It will be parallel to the Marine Products Export Development Authority doing the same work. They are encouraging the export potential of shrimps and spawns. But, the point is that the people who invest so much of money have to take a licence and within three years the licence will lapse. So, what is the guarantee for them? They will involve their money to the tune of Rs. 3/- crores, Rs. 4/- crores or even Rs. 10/- crores after taking bank loans. To formulate an aquaculture farm itself takes at the minimum one or two years. So, there will be a sense of insecurity, because they won't know what will happen after three years. I would request the hon. Minister to look into it and see if this period can be made 10 years. If not ten years, it can be five years at the minimum. Moreover, since the officers will have the authority to renew the licence, it will lead to corruption because so much money will be involved. They will demand money for renewal of a licence. In any case the Authority will have the power to cancel the licence at any point of time if they do not follow the rules. Therefore, I say, prescribing the limit of three years will do more harm than good.

My other point is that this kind of

legislation will compel us to have a fresh look at the Environment Protection Act. I do not blame the Supreme Court, because they went into the letter and spirit of the Act and the decision of the Government. It is because we made an enactment that way, we Bill, created a problem. So, while supporting the, I request the Hon. Minister to have a fresh look into the Environment Act of 1986. Of course, we have to protect the environment, but at the same time we have to look into the practical difficulties that have been experienced so far. That is why I said at the beginning that the people who are living next to the sea, are facing the problem. They are facing the threat of sea-erosion at the time of every monsoon. You visit Kerala on the fourth of next month and you will see how disastrous it is.

[The Vice Chairman (Shri Triloki Nath Chaturvedi) in the Chair]

It is foreign invasion. While supporting the Bill and while thanking the Minister for protecting the interests of workers as well as the investors—especially many from Kerala are involved—I want him to look into my suggestion of increasing the period of 3 years and also the Government should look into bringing forth some kind of an amendment on the basis of practical experience gained from the Environment Protection Act, 1986. Thank You.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (West Bengal):
Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I can see the urgency which has prompted the Minister to bring forth this Bill at the fag end of this particular session. I can see his justification in supporting the Bill because unless some decision is taken by this kind of legislation, employment will be affected and the flow of foreign exchange resources will also be affected. So, I am supporting this Bill. At the same time, I would not like this Bill to be seen as an attempt to overturn the decision of the Supreme Court. I would also not like the warning of the Supreme Court to be *dusnussed out of hand* we

are going in for heavy commercialisation of agriculture. This commercialisation has many pitfalls. It has long-term environmental implications. These should be studied and considered. Whatever measure we take now should not be at the cost of environmental degradation in the long run for the country as a whole. As far as shrimp farming is concerned, there are a number of problems which have come to light. For example, the two reports of the United Nations agencies—the United Nations Research Institute of Social Development has produced a report on fish farming and another report was produced by one of the UNDP experts—have raised certain issues which I hope the Ministry of Agriculture would consider. One of the points they made is this, the shrimp farming encroaches on paddy farming. They introduce saline water. Paddy farming is converted into shrimp farming. Farmers go in for it because there is an attractive offer. They offer a very good price to the farmers. Farmers give up the land for fish farming companies. But then what happens? Sometimes the demand falls in the world market. For example, in the case of Taiwan, many of the companies started this farming, but they were closed down because the demand went down. Sometimes the disease spreads and the fish farming collapses. When the fish farming collapses, there is no way of going back to paddy farming. You cannot switch over to paddy farming. It is irreversible. It can only be reversed after a very long time, maybe, 70 years, 80 years or 90 years. So, the damage that you are going to cause to paddy farming is irreversible. You are changing, the land use pattern which cannot be converted very soon. This problem should be seriously taken into account. These companies which go in for fish farming never pay the farmer the price for this very serious environmental degradation. The farmer not being very educated, doesn't know what risk he is taking. If tomorrow the demand goes down, all our farms will have to be closed

down. These people cannot go back to paddy farming and that should be clearly understood. What is the demand for this product in the world market? There are all kinds of fluctuations. We cannot really expect a steady stream of income.

Another issue which comes up with this kind of shrimp farming is its impact on the mangroves in these coastal areas. Mangroves play a certain ecological role. The land meets the sea at that point. These mangroves maintain the land structure. They balance the weather and protect the soil conditions. If you go in particularly for this kind of farming, it destroys the ecological balance in the coastal areas with serious implications on agriculture, on livelihood and other things. These issues have been raised by international experts.

A third kind of problem comes which should also be highlighted. If you go in for commercialisation of aquaculture, your focus is only on the shrimps. You take out a lot of other things, spawns of the other fish because immediately they are not usable for this particular purpose. You destroy them. So, while we are gaining in terms of fish-farming, shrimp-farming, we are losing a lot in terms of farming other kinds of fish which could have been used for domestic consumption. This should be assessed and without assessing this, we should not simply say, because some employment is affected, we should take some action. The long-term implications on the other sections of the society should also be taken into consideration.

Then, there is an exaggerated view about the importance of fish farming for our exports. If you look at the data for fish and fish preparations as one record—there is no record for shrimp-farming in the figures which I have—there has been an increase in the amount earned from the export of fish and fish preparations. From something like 274 million dollars in 1980-81, it has increased to slightly more than one billion dollars in 1994-95. This is certainly an increase. But it is not

that substantial. Moreover, if you look at the proportion of Indian fish and fish preparations' export to all exports, it is one of the lowest. For example, it is only 1.8 per cent of the total world exports. In fact, it was two per cent in 1980 and there has been a decline in our share as far as shrimp exports are concerned. So, while I agree that foreign exchange should be earned, there is some exaggerated view about the importance of shrimp-farming. I want this to be scaled down so that we know what we have, so that there is no exaggerated view about shrimp-farming.

Lastly, the point I would like to make is this. For the time being I agree with this because 31st March is so near and we cannot afford to get whatever is there destroyed because it is difficult again for them to come back. I would suggest to the Minister one thing. We are passing this Bill. But as far as the existing shrimp farms are concerned in the coastal areas, please give an undertaking to us in this House a very clear undertaking, that within the next six months, all these fish farms would be examined case by case, in consultation with the people who understand our ecology. There is no point in inviting me or Mr. Narayanasamy for that. There have to be some experts on ecology to understand how the ecological balance is disturbed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Why are you including Mr. Narayanasamy? He is an expert.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Well, I like him very much. That is the reason why I mention myself and him. There must be some experts who understand ecology. They should determine whether the ecological balance has been disturbed. If we fill this Authority with people who are only representing the industrial interests to which they belong, it will not serve the purpose. I think there should be members who are drawn from other sections of the society who understand the overall implications. Only then will it make some sense. And this Authority must go through all

the existing farms, their positions, their conditions and all that, within the next six months so that those farms which are not in line with our environment, which are causing environmental degradation, are closed down, come what may. I might reduce production, foreign exchange or employment. They are all important in the short run. But in the long run, we cannot afford environmental degradation which is irreversible. So, a decision should be taken on this within six months. I would very much appreciate if the Minister is prepared to give an undertaking in the House. If he is giving that undertaking, I have no difficulty in supporting this Bill because I do not want also these employment and all that to be disturbed just now. Thank you very much.

SHRI R. MARGABANDU (Tamil Nadu): Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chairman. Sir, I strongly oppose this Bill as long as.....

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry): As long as Mr. Chaturanan Mishra is the Agriculture Minister.

SHRI R. MARGABANDU: as long as the second proviso to clause 12 sub-clause (6) is on the statute. It reads, "Provided further that nothing in this sub-section shall apply in the case of an aquaculture farm which is in existence on the appointed day." This runs contrary to the provisions of sub-clause (6) which says, "No licence shall be granted for aquaculture farming proposed to be carried out within two hundred metres from the High Tide Line." As a matter of fact, there are suggestions that the distance should be 500 metres. According to (he Supreme Court judgement, the distance should be 1,000 metres. So, in sub-section (6) of clause 12 the distance of 200 metres should be substituted by 1,000 metres. If it is adopted, I welcome this Bill; otherwise, I am opposing this Bill. The reason why I say so is that there is a judgement delivered by the Supreme

Court. The Supreme Court judgement says that it is a method which causes salinity, sedimentation, health hazard beside spoiling drinking water. These are the four consideration which have been taken into consideration by the Supreme Court while delivering the judgement. The judgement of the Supreme Court is not a half-baked judgement. It has got a good basis. The reports examined by the Supreme Court include the Alagirisamy Report submitted at the conference of the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the two reports by the National Environmental Engineering Institute, Justice Surcsh's Report and the United Nations Survey. These are the reports on the basis of which the judgement was delivered,

Sir, from the Statement of Objects and Reasons it seems that this Bill is Introduced with a purpose to get away from the clutches of the Supreme Court judgement. One aspect it accepted. The Supreme Court had suggested the constitution of an authority, This Bill has been Introduced for that purpose, I will appreciate the hon. Agriculture Minister's Intelligence in drafting this Bill and explaining things. I will come to it a little later. The Bill is not introduced with a good intention at all. It is with an intention to overcome the Supreme Court judgment, This Bill is a sugar-coated pill. I can say that. This is what he has stated in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, "Since it is necessary to validate all coastal aquaculture farms set up hitherto retrospectively". Here comes the mischief. Whatever mischief has been done by the big monopolistic persons, who are having this aquaculture on the coastal areas, is validated. It is not the small farmers who are having one or two acres, but big moneyed people, big companies who are having thousands of acres on the coastal areas, who are going to be benefited. In Andhra Pradesh the area extends up to 25 miles into the interior land from the coastal area. The same is the case in Tamil Nadu, in Kerala and in Maharashtra. In all these States

the saline water, when it is stored, percolates into an area to the extent of 10 miles to 15 miles. The result is that in the coastal areas, an area up to 100 miles becomes unfit for cultivation. The saline water percolates into the interior. With the saline water it is not possible to do any cultivation, either paddy or anything. Therefore, it will do a great injustice to the people. The big moneyed people are purchasing the land at a high cost displacing the agriculturists from that area. In Mayavaram area of Tamil Nadu there was a massive agitation. One Jagannathan had filed a public interest litigation before the Supreme Court. These situations are not taken care of. I would like to know whether the Government wants to support the bigwigs by way of this Bill. Who are behind this Bill? I would like to know whether those people who are going to face the demolition of aquaculture are supporting this and whether they are behind this Bill, I would also like to know whether the Government would support those people who are rendering the land unfit for cultivation, so long as this proviso is there, it will justify the injustice that is done to the agriculturists. A great injustice has already been done to the agriculturists. It is only because of this the Supreme Court had come in the way and we are talking of judicial activism. In a way it will protect environment situation also, But this sort of a thing will help some bigwigs and moneyed persons who are backing this Government, My party will not accept it, Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I appeal to the Minister to remove Clause 12 (6) proviso II from the Statute, Then alone a good spirit will be exhibited in this Bill.

I would like to say one more thing. The hon. Minister has mentioned that about three lakh persons will be rendered homeless. But on the other hand in Clause 10(2) it is mentioned:

"Where the Authority orders for removal or demolition of any aquaculture farm under clause (d)

of sub-section (1), the workers of the said farm shall be paid compensation in accordance with the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947."

So the persons who would be rendered jobless or who would be thrown out of jobs, their interest has been safeguarded by the hon. Minister.

I appreciate the hon. Minister for this provision. Then there is another provision that before the demolition they will be given a hearing. This is a principle of natural justice. The hon. Minister has bestowed his thought while drafting this Bill. But this mischief has to be removed. So long as it is there, it will be doing injustice to the common man and we will be supporting only the moneyed people. It will not help the common man. It will not protect environment. At the same time, I would like to appeal to the Minister of Environment to bring a Bill for containing water pollution. Tanneries and dyeing factories and other factories which are releasing water which is affecting the agricultural land. If the Environmental Minister comes forward with such a Bill, in which case this Bill will be very good. It will be appreciated. At the moment there is a bad Bill with a bad taste. That proviso to sub clause 6 to clause 12 has to be removed. Then alone it will be giving a good taste. I oppose this Bill so long as it is on Statute.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRJLOK1 NATH CHATURVEDI): Mr. Margabandu, at the moment the Minister wants your support, not your appreciations. The Deputy Chairperson has already requested the Minister to consider bringing wider issues subsequently before this House.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I will be very brief. The hon. Minister has come forward with this Bill in accordance with the direction of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has directed that an Aquaculture

Authority shall be established to regulate aquaculture farming in coastal areas. In fact I raised this issue in the august House by way of a Special Mention. As I mentioned earlier, there is 8,500 acres of land on which the farming community is depending, which is giving foreign exchange to the tune of Rs. 3,000 crores to the Government of India. Therefore, this area has to be taken care of. Several delegations, especially from the States of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and also some parts of Gujarat and coastal areas of Maharashtra, met the hon. Minister and also the hon. Prime Minister. When the aquaculture activities were started by the farming community and also by the people in this trade, neither the Central Government nor the State Government regulated these activities. What happened was, the countries like Taiwan said, "We have got an excellent technology which we would like to give to your country." Some farmers and all those people who export prawn went to this country. In the normal ponds in which they used to culture prawn, they used to get 2.5 to 3 metric tonnes of prawn per hectare. Under this new system, by putting more seeds in the pond, by intensively culturing it and by using the seeds which had been imported, they lost everything. In Andhra Pradesh, there was a viral attack. Even Orissa had it. The farming community suffered heavily. NABARD and various other banks invested huge amounts in this when the business was booming. After that the farmers went in for intensive cultivation. Sir, the Bill is laudable. Yesterday, we passed the National Environment Appellate Authority Bill. We find that it has become a practice to accommodate retired bureaucrats and retired judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts in these Authorities. The hon. Minister, who is a senior leader, should see that the people who are appointed are well qualified people. By just appointing retired persons, you will not achieve anything. You may help somebody who is

just out of the Department of Environment or the judiciary. But you will not be doing your job as envisaged in this Bill. Sir, I know that there are saline areas along the coast-line which cannot be used for cultivation. But we have to make use of this land. We should also have a mechanism to protect the environment. The people who live near these saline areas are Harijans, the Scheduled Castes, the villagers and the backward people. What is their living condition? No doubt, they get employment. But they do not get drinking water because the entire area is saline. People come there and make huge investments and also make a lot of money. But the employees are not paid regularly. Therefore, protection should be given to the employees who are working there. The people who make huge profits—some of them own 100 hectares and 200 hectares of land here—are not doing anything for the purpose of protecting the environment. Therefore, the situation there has come to this stage. I would like to seek certain clarifications from the hon. Minister. I have already brought an amendment. I want that the State representation should be increased to 5 members from 2 members. We have nine coastal States and they have to be represented adequately. Otherwise, only the views of the bureaucrats will prevail and not the views of the State Governments. Therefore, I want that this should be taken care of. Especially the bigger States like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Orissa should be adequately represented. Therefore, I request the hon. Minister to consider my amendment and increase the representation of the States from two members to five members. The hon. Minister is blowing hot and cold...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): We have to keep in view the time allotted.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: I am going to be very brief. You may have

noticed that I am not going out of the subject. I would just like to make two, three small points and then I will conclude. Mr. Minister, I could not understand your intentions. You are a labour leader. We would like to know whether you are treating the employees as industrial workers or as agricultural workers. If the pond is demolished on the orders of the Authority for violating environmental laws, you will have to pay compensation under the Industrial Disputes Act. If they are working in the pond they should be paid as agricultural labourers. What is the difference? What is the analogy? They should be paid either as industrial workers or as labourers who are working in agricultural fields even if the pond is demolished. You should take bold steps because NABARD is investing Rs. 4,000 crores and Rs. 2,000 crores have been invested by the banks. You tell them that this is an industry because people are earning money out of it. Then you bring the industrial law. It is still the CPI policy, it is neither here nor there and you are announcing the Bill.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): You address the Chair. He will give a convincing answer.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I am commenting on the Minister's Bill. The Minister is the author of the Bill. He is piloting the Bill. Therefore, I am saying this. You should have a clear-cut policy, not like the CPI. Sir, the proviso that has been given in Clause 12, Subsection 6 says:

"Provided that in case of creeks, rivers and backwards, no such licence shall be granted within the Coastal Regulation Zone declared for the time being under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986."

By bringing this Bill you wanted to restrict the coastal regulation zone from 500 metres to 200 metres. Why? You tell

most of the ponds are near the creeks or the river side. It is not on the coastal side, most of them are not on the coastal side. Therefore, I need certain clarifications on this point. Sir, the hon. Member, Shri Margabandu, has mentioned that it is a very serious thing. Yes, we have to protect the existing ponds. It is a fact because the Supreme Court has come heavily on that. The farming community has to be protected. Is it not the duty of the Ministry or this Bill to regulate the working ponds by making them apply and get licence? It has to be done. If they don't do it, then there is pollution on the one side and the new ponds that are coming will have to adhere to the rules. I do not know what is in the Minister's mind. The existing ones also have to pass through the test. There should also be a licence. You give them a time-frame by which they can complete the formality. That is also to be done. Therefore, Mr. Minister, there are so many lacunae in the Bill. You brought this Bill in haste to satisfy the farming community; I welcome it. But there are lacunae which I want you to go through and you give an assurance on the floor of the House that you will remove the anomalies and then bring amendments in the coming session of the Parliament, not in the month of June. Please bring the amendments in the month of April and thereafter rectify all the anomalies. Thank you.

श्री जलालुद्दीन अंसारी (बिहार): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं इस बिल का समर्थन करने के लिए खड़ा हुआ हूँ।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री त्रिलोकी नाथ चतुर्वेदी): वैसे आपका एक मिनट है।

श्री जलालुद्दीन अंसारी: उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने जो जजमेंट दिया, उसी को ध्यान में रखते हुए यह बिल लाया गया है। जो एक्वाकल्चर में काम करने वाले वर्कर हैं, वह करीब तीन लाख हैं जो बेरोजगार हो जाते। उनको राहत देने के लिए यह बिल लाया जा रहा है। मुझे एक दो सुझाव देने हैं। सेक्शन 12 में लाइसेंस देने की बात कही गई है। मेरा सुझाव होगा माननीय मंत्री

जी से कि लाइसेंस देने की प्रक्रिया आसान होनी चाहिये। ऐसी प्रक्रिया नहीं हो कि जिससे लाइसेंस प्राप्त करने में लोगों को कठिनाई हो।

5.00 P.M.

और बाधाएं भी उपस्थित हो तो इसका ख्याल इस बिल में होना चाहिए। यह मेरा सुझाव होगा मंत्री जी से कि इसका ख्याल रखें कि प्रक्रिया लाइसेंस देने की सरल हो, आसान हो।

दूसरी बात इसमें कही गयी है कि लाइसेंस तीन साल तक के लिए ही वैलिड होगा। मेरा सुझाव इसमें है कि तीन साल की बजाए इसको पांच साल तक वैलिड माना जाना चाहिए। इसकी पांच साल की सीमा निर्धारित होनी चाहिए। यह मेरी डिमांड है। जहां तक सवाल उठता है कि पर्यावरण को भी बचाया जाना चाहिए तो पर्यावरण की रक्षा निश्चित तौर पर होनी चाहिए। लेकिन अभी पर्यावरण के नाम पर हमारे देश में इस तरह की बातें हो रही हैं कि शायद इससे बहुत सारा विकास का काम बंद हो जाएगा, बहुत सारे फार्म्स बंद हो जाएंगे, बहुत सारे काम बंद हो जाएंगे। तो हम समझते हैं कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने रिट पिटीशन पर जो जजमेंट दिया है और उन्होंने जो सरकार को निर्देश दिया है कि इसके लिए एक अलग बिल लाया जाए-एक्वाकल्चर अथॉरिटी जिसके जरिए उनको रेगुलेट किया जाए- उसके मुताबिक सरकार जो यह बिल लायी है यह सही है और मैं इस बिल का समर्थन करता हूँ।

□ **شری جلیل الدین انصاری "ہمار":** آپ سبھا ادھیکش مہودے۔ میں اس بل کا سمرتن کرنے کیلئے کھڑا ہوں۔

آپ سبھا ادھیکش "شری ترلوکی ناتھ چترویدی":
ویسے آپکا ایک منٹ ہے

شری جلال الدین انصاری: آپ سبھا ادھیکش جی۔ سپریم کورٹ نے جو ججمینٹ دیا۔ اسی کو دھیان میں رکھتے ہوئے یہ بل لیا گیا ہے۔ جو ایکواکچر میسن کام

کرنے والے ورکر ہیں۔ وہ قریب تین لاکھ ہیں جو بے روزگار ہو جاتے ہیں۔ انکو راحت دینے کیلئے یہ بل لیا جا رہا ہے۔ مجھے ایک دو سچھاؤ دینے ہیں۔ سیکشن ۱۲ میں لائسنس دینے کی بات کہی گئی ہے۔ میرا سچھاؤ ہوگا ماننیہ منتری جی سے کہ لائسنس دینے کی پرکریہ آسان ہونی چاہیئے۔ ایسی پرکریہ نہیں ہوگی جس سے لائسنس حاصل کرنے میں لوگوں کو کٹھنائی ہو۔ اور مشکلات بھی ہوں تو اسکا خیال اس بل میں ہونا چاہیئے۔ یہ میرا سچھاؤ ہوگا منتری جی سے اسکا خیال رکھیں کہ پرکریہ لائسنس دینے کی آسان ہو۔ "سرل ہو"۔ دوسری بات اسمیں یہ کہی گئی ہے کہ لائسنس ۳ سال تک کیلئے "ویلوڈ" ہوگا میرا سچھاؤ اسمیں ہے کہ ۳ سال کے بجائے اسکو "پانچ سال تک ویلیڈ" مانا جانا چاہئے اسکی ۵ سال کی حد متیعن ہونی چاہئے یہ میری ڈیمانڈ ہے۔ جہا تک سوال اٹھتا ہے کہ "پریاورن" کو بھی بچایا جانا چاہئے تو پریاورن کی رکشان شچت روپ سے ہونی چاہئے۔ لیکن ابھی پریاورن کے نام پر ہمارے دیش میں اسطرح کی باتیں ہو رہی ہیں کہ شاید اس سے بہت سارا وکاس کا کام بند ہو جائیگا۔ بہت سارے فارمس بند ہو جائیں گے۔ تو ہم سمجھتے ہیں کہ سپریم کورٹ نے رٹ پٹیشن پر جو ججمنٹ

دیا ہے اور انہوں نے جو سرکار کو نردیش دیا ہے کہ اسکے لئے ایک الگ بل لایا جائے۔ ایکواکلچر اتھارٹی جسکے ذریعہ انکو ریگولیٹ کیا جائے۔ اسکے مطابق سرکار جو یہ بل لائی ہے یہ سہیں ہے اور میں اس بل کا سمرتھن کرتا ہوں۔ "ختم شد"

उपसभाध्यक्ष(श्री त्रिलोकी नाथ चतुर्वेदी): श्री ईश दत्त यादव। आपका उनसे दुगना टाइम हैं।

श्री ईश दत्त यादव(उत्तर प्रदेश): ठीक है मान्यवर, हम दो ही मिनट में खत्म करेंगे।

जल कृषि प्राधिकरण विधेयक, 1977 का मैं समर्थन करता हूँ। उच्चतम न्यायालय के निर्णय के कारण सरकार को जल्दी करनी पड़ी है। मैं धन्यवाद देना चाहता हूँ कृषि मंत्री जी को कि समुद्र तट पर रहने वाले वे लोग जो जल कृषि पर आधारित है ऐसे लोगों की संख्या जो उन्होंने लगभग 3 लाख बताया है, इन 3 लाख लोगों की जीविका शायद इस कानून से समाप्त होने से बच जाएगी।

बहुत से माननीय सदस्यों ने कई सुझाव दिए हैं। मैं उनके विस्तार में नहीं जाना चाहता। केवल इतना ही अनुरोध करना चाहता हूँ कृषि मंत्री जी से कि यह विधेयक पास हो रहा है लेकिन जो सुझाव आए हैं इन पर आप गंभीरता से विचार करके पुनः इस कानून में संशोधन करें वरना इससे हार्डशिप भी हो सकती है।

प्रदूषण, पर्यावरण, आदमी की रोजी-रोटी और जिंदगी ये सब एक दूसरे से मिले हुए हैं। आदमी के जिंदा रहने के लिए प्रदूषण भी जरूरी हो गया है। बिना प्रदूषण के आदमी जिंदा भी नहीं रह सकेगा। अगर देश के सब कारखाने बंद कर दिए जाएं तो सारा विकास का प्लानिंग का काम ठप्प हो जाएगा और कारखानें अगर धुआं देते रहेंगे तो आदमी जिंदा भी नहीं बचेगा। यह बड़ी विषम परिस्थिति है। कृषि मंत्री

जी का काम तो सीमित लगता है खेतीबाड़ी तक लेकिन मैं सरकार से चाहूंगा कि इस देश के अंदर प्रदूषण जो फैल रहा है इस प्रदूषण पर रोक लगाए और लोग रोजी रोटी से भी वंचित न हों, उनकी जीविका भी चलती रहे।

मैं समाप्त ही करूंगा। मैं कल एक उदाहरण दे रहा था कि हम उत्तर प्रदेश से आते हैं। लखनऊ में हजरत गंज एक जगह है। वहां से रेलवे स्टेशन तक सब आटो रिक्शा ही चलते हैं, दूसरा कोई साधन नहीं है स्टेशन जाने के लिए। जो लोग गए हैं उत्तर प्रदेश वे देखें होंगे। दिन में भी मान्यवर, खूब धूप रहती है उस समय भी आटो रिक्शा से इतना धुआं निकलता है कि अंधेरा सा छाया रहता है। सड़क के किनारे रहने वाले लोगों के लिए गंभीर समस्या है। लेकिन आटो रिक्शा बंद कर दिए जाएं तो चलाने वाले भूखों मर जाएंगे। उनका परिवार मर जाएगा। इसीलिए मैं सरकार से मांग कर रहा हूँ कि प्रदूषण, पर्यावरण और आदमी की जिंदगी और जीविका इन सबका समन्वय करने के लिए उसे गंभीरता से विचार करना चाहिए। और इसके उपाय करने चाहिए और मैं कृषि मंत्री जी को धन्यवाद देना चाहूंगा कि माननीय उच्चतम न्यायालय के निर्णय का सम्मान भी हो रहा है और यह प्राधिकरण बन जाने से जो लोग जल कृषि पर आधारित है उनकी जीविका और उनका जीवन भी बच जाएगा।

इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ, मैं इस विधेयक का समर्थन कर रहा हूँ। धन्यवाद।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI):
Thank you, Ist Dutt Yadavji. Shri Yerra Narayanaswamy. Please conclude in two minutes.

SHRI NARAYANASWAMY (Andhra Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I support the Bill. The aquafarmers and workers of coastal States are lookine

forward towards this Bill. I thank the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Agriculture Minister for introducing this Bill.

The aquafarmers have invested mere than five thousand crores of rupees in aquafarming. In Andhra Pradesh itself more than two thousand crores of rupees have been invested. NABARD has given liberal loans. The scheduled banks have given loans for encouraging shrimp farming. Many small farmers have invested all their might in this activity. The Marine Products Export Development Authority encourages people to earn more foreign exchange from exports. MPEDA also gives subsidies to farmers. The Andhra Pradesh Government gave land, to the landless and formed cooperative societies exclusively of fishermen for aquafarming. So, Sir, the existing aquafarming cannot be dismantled due to non-compliance of guidelines on environment. They must be given time to observe these guidelines.

Sir, in the Statement of Objects and Reasons it is stated that there are about three lakhs of workers. In Andhra Pradesh itself there will be about three lakhs of workers because throughout the coast-line a number of people are engaged in this activity—right from collecting seeds to farming. Lakhs of workers are there. I want to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that many more workers are involved in this activity.

The other point is about licensing. Now there are small farmers as well as marginal farmers. Renewing a licence every three years is very difficult. As hon. Member, Shri Vayalar Ravi, has suggested, it should be five years. So far as safeguarding of the environment is concerned, I agree and there is no doubt that salinity has increased. Drinking water problem is there in the sea-coast area and brackish-water area. So, I have a suggestion to make to the

hon. Minister. Big farmers and corporate companies are there. Some cess should be collected from them for the welfare of people who are living in the coastal areas arid brackish water area, particularly for drinking water purposes. That may serve the welfare of the people.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-chairman.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैंने शुरू में ही कह दिया था कि इस विधेयक का, इस बिल का उद्देश्य सुप्रीम कोर्ट से टकराना नहीं है, उनके आदेशों को सही ढंग से लागू करने के लिए एक सुसम्मत प्रक्रिया स्थापित करना है। Hon. Margabandu said that this is not sugar coated and all that. Neither the sugar is coated nor is it without sugar. Everything is there written very clearly and you can understand that. The whole idea is that there were a large number of farms and their cases were never heard. The Authority will go into them one by one. But, the first priority will be ecology. We don't want it to, be destroyed because that it a thing which you cannot build and manufacture once it is destroyed. So, that would be the guiding line. But, at the same time, all ecology is meant for human beings. Therefore, their miseries will be looked into. That is why I have adopted this method. So, I request you to reconsider it.

Secondly, all hon. Members who participated in the debate supported this Bill. The Chair directed that after some time I should bring some motion to discuss it. If the Authority is established and it works for some time* surely, I will have no objection. All of us can discuss this question. It concerns the whole country and I have no objection at all.

As regards setting up of a Parliamentary Committee, I don't think this is the time I should say that a Parliamentary Committee should be set up immediately, but Parliament is always sovereign. You can ask me anytime. I can appoint any committee. It is for Chair to decide if. Generally, I have no objection on such things. During the course of the debate, two or three things have

emerged. One is licence period. I will say about it when we take up clause by clause discussion, but if three years' time is less, then let it be five years. I have nothing to add.

As regards composition of the Authority, there are not bureaucrats only, as they are saying. Of course, a retired High Court judge will be there. A member who is an expert in the field of aquaculture is there; a member who is an expert in the field of pollution control is there; so you should not say that there are bureaucrats only. There is a member who is an expert in the field of environment protection and then we have the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Ministry of Agriculture. The number of members from the States can be increased, I don't have any objection to that, they will also be bureaucrats. The difference is they will be in service.

SHRI V. NABAYANASAMY: They will be appointed by the State Governments. If the Central Government appoints bureaucrats, then why not the State Governments?

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: I am not for bureaucrats. I told you that these are all experts. Three scientists will be there. But, these are not such vital things on which we should differ. If that is the position, then I will accept that also.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Hon. Minister, Mr; Narayanasamy is free With so many suggestions.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: I have already said that when we discuss it, everything will be replied properly. So, this is all what I wanted to say. As the time is short, I finish my speech.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): The Minister has responded to various suggestions

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Very briefly, Sir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Yes, he has been very precise.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Today the rules for an appropriate reply have also been relaxed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): The question is:

"That the Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1997 be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): We shall ' now take up clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): On page 3, there is an amendment by Shri V. Narayanasamy.

CLAUSE ^ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE AUTHORITY AND
APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON
AND MEMBERS)

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I move;
1. "That at page 1, line 3, for the word "two" the word "five" be substituted,"

The question was proposed,

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I have already spoken in the amendment, I want to inform the hon. Minister that there are nine States where this aquaculture farming is going on.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): But, you are not pressing for your amendment.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I am pressing for my amendment.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Instead of two, you want four?

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Five.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: How can it be five? There should be an odd number for voting.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Okay, you give four and I will be content.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: I agree to that suggestion.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: If the Minister bargains, what can I do. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Are you withdrawing your amendment?

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: No, Sir. Sir, I want representation for the States. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Sir, I have accepted his suggestion. ...It is just for four. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): The question is:

"That at page 3, line 3, for the word "two" the word "four" be substituted."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 3, as amended, was added to the Bill.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I thank the Minister,

Clauses 4, to 11 were added to the Bill,

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): There is an amendment to clause 12 in the name of Shri Vayalar Ravi,

Clause 12: Lienm for aquaculture farming.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, I move:

"That at page 5, line 11, for the words "three years", the words "five years" be substituted."

The question was proposed.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Sir, I accept the amendment.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI

TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): The question is:

"That at page 5, line 11, for the words "three years", the words "five years" be substituted."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 12, as amended, was added to the Bill,

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, CP1 is always flexible. The CPM is not flexible. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Sir, Now he should withdraw his comment about the CPM. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): It was not a comment, ...*(Interruptions)*... It was a tribute that he paid. ...*(Interruptions)*... How responsive the Minister is! ...*(Interruptions)*...

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: He has deng it only now because a man has been nominated on the Board from Tamil Nadu. : = = *(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): The Minister has accepted two amendments. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: one from Kerala and one from Tamil Nadu! ...*(Interruptions)*...

Clause 12 to 14 were added to the Bill

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

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Sir, t move that the Bill, as amended be passed.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

IMPROVED PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS WITH PAKISTAN

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL):

As honourable Members are aware,

Indo-Pakistan official level talks at Foreign Secretary level are due to be held from March 28 to 31 in New Delhi. Talks at a higher level are also expected thereafter. We approach these talks in a positive and constructive spirit.

As honourable Members would have noticed, Pakistan has announced its decision to release 38 Indian children who have been under detention in Pakistan since 1994. We appreciate this gesture. These children were /travelling on Indian fishing vessels which were apprehended by Pakistani authorities over two years ago. We have made many representations on their behalf and I had raised the Issue with Foreign Minister Sahabiada Yakub Khan when I met him on December 18, 1996 in New Delhi. It is a matter of satisfaction that Pakistan has now responded positively, and steps have already been initiated by us to ensure that the children are brought from Pakistan to India at the earliest. May I also convey our deep gratitude to Maulana Abdul Sattar Idhi who has taken good care of them for over a year and a half while they were lodged in the Idhi Centre in Karachi.

As honourable Members are aware, travel by Pakistani nationals to India, under a reciprocal arrangement with Pakistan, is permitted only on the basis of visitors visa. These visas are meant essentially for visits to meet close relations. This is obviously very restrictive. In keeping with our policy to promote people-to-people relations, we have decided to permit Pakistani tourists to visit India in groups. This, as honourable Members will agree, is a major new unilateral step in the right direction. In addition, we have also decided to ease travel by Pakistani businessmen to India. They will now be eligible to one year multi-entry visa and, if travelling by air, they can exit and enter either through Mumbai or Delhi. The other measures we will implement are:

- (i) Young and elderly Pakistani visitors will be exempt from police