

[श्री आनन्द प्रकाश गौतम]

रफी साहब गरीब से गरीब लोगों की भावनाओं से जुड़े हुए थे और भारत सरकार के सिक्के भी गरीब से गरीब आदमी के पास जाते हैं, इसलिए उनके नाम का सिक्का संचालित किया जाय।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): Maulana Obaidullah Khan Azmi. He is not here.

अब सदन की बठक दोपहर बाद 2 बजे कर 42 मिनट तक के लिए स्थगित की जाती है।

The House then adjourned for lunch, at forty-four minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled, after lunch, at forty-seven minutes past two of the clock, The Vice-Chairman L.(Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan) in the Chair.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): We will now take up the Passports (Amendment) Bill, 1992. Mr. Salman Khursheed.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ (Haryana): The Minister is not here.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): Yes, the Minister is not here.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Then adjourn the House.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): We will send for him. ... (Interruptions) ...

AN HON. MEMBER: Dr. Abrar Ahmed can move the Bill. ... (Interruptions) ...

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: He does not have the papers.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): Then we will take up the next Bill. We will send for the Minister. ... (Interruptions) ...

श्री प्रमोद महाजन (महाराष्ट्र)

यह तो सदन की अवमानना है। यह कोई आज नहीं है, कल से घोषित है।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): You are right.

श्री प्रमोद महाजन : मुझे लगता है इस पर आप कहें कि अगला लेगे, अगला आदमी नहीं होगा तो आप कहेंगे अगला लेगे (व्यवधान)

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): No, I leave it to the House. I agree with you.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Minister has come. ... (Interruptions) ...

एक साननीय लद य : भाटिया जी आ गये हैं।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI-MATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): Now Mr. Bhatia is here. We can take up the Passports (Amendment) Bill.

श्री प्रमोद महाजन : मंत्री जी खेद तो प्रकट करें थोड़ा।

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : इनको तो अढ़ाई बजे यहाँ पर आना चाहिये था।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): Madam, I am sorry, I came late.

THE PASSPORTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1992

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI R. L. BHATIA): Madam, I beg move to:

That the Bill further to amend the Passport Act, 1967 as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

Madam Vice-Chairman, the administration of the departure of persons from India through the issue of passports has been governed by the Passports Act of 1967. The Act has provided a framework for what has become, over a period of time, the growing phenomenon of persons travelling abroad for purposes of education, business, employment, pilgrimage and tourism. An increasing number of persons have thus been seeking to travel outside India. There has also been a phenomenal growth over just two years in the recent past in passport applications received.

Based on the experience that we have gained in administering the Act, we found that there were certain aspects that required to be addressed to through legislation to make the provisions of the Act current and to remedy certain lacunae in its effective implementation. It will be recognized that the very nature of our passport booklet has undergone major changes. This has been the result of an ongoing review to bring it on par with international standards. The changes involve design, materials used and the introduction of several features which make the booklet more in keeping with those of the international community. Further developments will, over the next few years, lead to the introduction of Machine Readable Passports and Visas, also in keeping with international decisions on the subject. The Bill will enable the Government to take suitable steps to recover the cost of issuing a passport and to provide for more effective deterrence in case of misuse. The cost of issuing a passport has gone up considerably since 1978 when the fee was increased from Rs. 25 to Rs. 50. For the Government to be able to provide effective services in this area it is essential that the product and the processes be consistently improved in keeping with

our requirements and mutually acceptable standards in the international community. The issue of passport is clearly not a commercial operation, but at the same time it is essential that the cost of the services be met by the fee that is charged for it.

Sir, we have also incorporated elements in the Bill to enhance the prescribed penalties in the event of offences committed under the Act. The penalties were prescribed several years ago, and it is desirable that they be made more stringent in order to provide for effective deterrence against fraud or misuse.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the service provided by the Central Passport Organisation is one of critical areas of the activities of the Ministry of External Affairs. We are deeply conscious of the need for smooth, effective and timely service to our fellow citizens. The Ministry is embarking on a major review of every aspect of the passport activity in view of the tremendous growth that we foresee in this area in coming years. We are confident that this exercise will result in an improved system with enhanced efficiency to cater to the needs of the Indian public.

Sir, I seek your leave now to request the House to take this Bill into consideration and to pass the Bill in its present form.

The question was proposed.

श्री राम रतन राम (उत्तर प्रदेश) :
उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, मैं आपका बहुत बहुत धन्यवाद करता हूँ कि आपने मुझे पासपोर्ट (संशोधन) विधेयक, 1992 पर बोलने का मौका दिया है। पासपोर्ट (संशोधन) विधेयक, 1992 में जो संशोधन प्रस्तावित है, उनके पांच उद्देश्य हैं। पहला, पासपोर्ट तैयार करने में जो वास्तविक व्यय होता है, उसके लिए समुचित फीस लेना, दूसरा जो पासपोर्ट कम समय के लिए जारी होते हैं उस के समय की अवधि बढ़ाना, तीसरा यदि कोई व्यक्ति तथ्यों को छिपा कर

[श्री राम रतन राम]

गलत ढंग से पासपोर्ट प्राप्त करता है तो उसका पासपोर्ट जप्त करना, चौथा दोषी व्यक्तियों के विरुद्ध कारावास की अवधि और जमाने की धनराशि को बढ़ाना तथा पांचवां जो व्यक्ति भारतीय नागरिक नहीं है, वे गलत ढंग से पासपोर्ट प्राप्त कर लेते हैं तो उनके विरुद्ध कारगर कार्यवाही करना। उपरोक्त सभी उद्देश्यों को देखते हुए जो संशोधन प्रस्तावित है वह स्वागत योग्य है तथा मैं इसका समर्थन करता हूँ। पासपोर्ट जारी करने में जो कठिनाइयाँ होती हैं, मैं सरकार का ध्यान उन कठिनाइयों की ओर आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ।

उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, स्वतंत्र देश के नागरिक को पासपोर्ट प्राप्त करने का अधिकार होता है। पासपोर्ट प्राप्त करने के लिए पांच फील्डज के व्यक्ति पासपोर्ट प्राप्त करने के योग्य होते हैं। पहली श्रेणी है डिप्लोमेट्स और ब्यूरोक्रेट्स की। दूसरी श्रेणी है विज्ञानसैन, इंस्टीट्यूट्स की। तीसरी श्रेणी में छात्र, इंजीनियर और डाक्टर हैं। चौथी श्रेणी में सामान्य स्तर के लोग जो रोजगार या छोटी नौकरियाँ प्राप्त करने के लिए अन्य देशों में भाग कर के अन्य देशों में जाते हैं। पांचवां कैटेगरी उन लोगों की होती है जो भारत के नागरिक नहीं हैं लेकिन गलत ढंग से पासपोर्ट प्राप्त करने की कोशिश करते हैं। जहाँ तक डिप्लोमेट्स और ब्यूरोक्रेट्स का प्रश्न है, उनको पासपोर्ट हासिल करने में कोई कठिनाई नहीं होती है। विज्ञानसैन या विज्ञानस एग्जीक्यूटिव या इंस्टीट्यूट्स को जो थोड़ी-बहुत कठिनाई होती है, वह अपने सोसैज के जरिये उन बाधाओं को पार कर के पासपोर्ट प्राप्त कर लेते हैं। असली कठिनाई छात्रों व सामान्य स्तर के नागरिकों को होती है जो कि अपनी छोटी नौकरी करने के लिए या छोटा व्यवसाय करने के लिए बाहर के देशों में जाते हैं खास करके मलेशिया, हांगकांग या गल्फ कंट्रीज आदि में। इन लोगों को पासपोर्ट बनाने में जो कठिनाई आती

है उन तकलीफों का पता में समय समय पर बयान किया जाता है। लेकिन एक जो अनुभव हुआ है उसको देखते हुए मैं यह कह सकता हूँ कि पासपोर्ट जारी करने में छात्रों की ओर विशेष ध्यान देना चाहिए। जो छात्र बाहर से छात्रवृत्ति पाकर या सरकार द्वारा छात्रवृत्ति पाकर विद्याध्ययन के लिए बाहर जाना चाहते हैं उनको सुविधा पूर्वक पासपोर्ट बनाने की सुविधा दी जाए। उसमें अनावश्यक विलम्ब न किया जाए। जो डाक्टर्स और इंजीनियर्स हैं उनको भी इसी प्रकार से विशेष सुविधा दी जानी चाहिए। जहाँ तक सामान्य स्तर के नागरिकों का प्रश्न है असली कठिनाई इन्हीं के साथ आती है। पासपोर्ट अधिकारी के पास जब आवेदन पत्र जाता है तो वहाँ से उसको वेरीफिकेशन के लिए पुलिस के पास भेजा जाता है। पुलिस वेरीफिकेशन कैसे होती है अगर आप एम.पी. बनने के पहले पासपोर्ट बनाने गये होंगे तो उसका आपको अनुभव हुआ होगा। जो बेचारे गरीब हैं वे मारे मारे फिरते हैं, कभी दरोगा के पास कभी एस. पी. के पास और इन सबमें विलम्ब होता है। इसलिए यह आवश्यक है कि जो पुलिस वेरीफिकेशन हो उसकी भी अवधि निश्चित की जाए कि इतनी अवधि के भीतर, एक महीने या दो महीने के भीतर उनके एप्लीकेंट्स वेरीफाई करके भेजे जाएं जिससे कि उनको पासपोर्ट बनाने में आसानी हो। इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं इस अमेंडमेंट बिल का समर्थन करते हुए चेंबर को धन्यवाद देता हूँ।

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): I rise to support the Passport (Amendment) Bill, 1992. It is a small Bill. It is basically a technical Bill. The hon. Minister seeks to have a blanket power from the Parliament as far as Section 5 is concerned. I see the intention of the Government to have the blanket power to recover the cost of the papers and other materials used. I want an assurance from the hon. Minister that this section will not be misused to collect some revenue from the applicants. It should recover only the cost of the paper and other material.

In Section 10 again, the hon. Minister has mentioned that the additional passport or the duplicate passport which shall be obtained by the person by misrepresentation will be impounded. The clause is silent as to what will happen to the original passport. I would like to know whether the Government will make a provision to see that these people are penalised by totally withdrawing that passport from such a person.

In Section 12 again, the Minister is proposing an amendment by which he has increased the period of imprisonment to two years and also a fine of Rs. 5,000/-. No lower ceiling has been specified. I think it will be appropriate if a lower ceiling of Rs. 1000/- is fixed. Otherwise it is a wild section where it gives ample power to a person to impose a fine of Rs. 10/-. I feel the Minister will see that some mechanism is introduced here to that the minimum fine is also fixed.

Again in Sections 12 and 13, it is mentioned only the Customs Officer. Customs officer empowered to do that duty by the Central Government. It would have been approved private that the Central Excise Officer was also included because our counters at the entry points are manned by the Customs and Central Excise Officers.

The Minister has introduced a new clause by which the Immigration Officer will also be permitted to action the line of the police officer. I think it is a good suggestion from the Minister.

I would suggest that this passport system throughout the country is computerised. Often this facility is being misused by our NRIs. Often 3.00 P.M. they come on transfer of residence (TRs). They try to hoodwink the Customs authorities. They say that they have misplaced their passports. I think this lacuna can be removed if the passport facility is centralised through our main computer system.

Madam, the Government had been talking about dual citizenship to NRIs. We have two former colonial Union Territories in this country, Pondicherry and the State of Goa where the alien Governments, those colonial powers had given some facilities to the citizens of those States. We have this facility in Goa also. I think it is going on illegally. We have the system of dual nationality. Any person who was born in Goa prior to the liberation of Goa is entitled to have the passport and citizenship also. So I feel that the Government should intervene in this matter and see that this mechanism is legalised. I was told that this is possible in Pondicherry also. In this connection, I was talking to the hon. Member from Pondicherry. He said that a citizen of our country who resides in Pondicherry can also have a French citizenship and he can have some travel documents, which is as good, as a foreign nationality. So, I think the Government should remove this lacuna and see that this is legalised.

With these few words, Madam, I support this Bill.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA (Bihar): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, at the outset I would like to know from the Minister whether the Passports (Amendment) Bill, 1992 which has been brought forward in this House in 1993 can be called the Passports (Amendment) Bill, 1992 or the Passports (Amendment) Bill, 1993.

SHRI M. A. BABY (Kerala): In this connection, the Minister has moved an amendment.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Then it is all right.

The provisions of this amendment Bill seek to rectify some of the anomalies and the shortcomings of the previous Bill. So the removal of those shortcomings which the hon. Minister has mentioned, through this Bill is really welcome. For example, he has said that the cost of printing and upgrading and

[Shrimati Kamla Sinha]

bringing the passport up to the international standards, has increased. The cost of the passport fee was increased to Rs. 50 in 1978. Now the fee is going to be increased again. If we consider the real value of Rs. 50, I say it is nothing. It will come to only a few paise. So this is okay.

But what I would like to place before the hon. Minister is some of the problems being faced by the applicants for getting the passports. For example, I come from Bihar and there is only one Regional Passport Office in Patna. If a person applies for a passport, it takes a long time, maybe six months may be one year or more. In almost all the Passport offices there is a den of corruption. From a peon to an officer, are involved in this corruption. I do not know how you are going to weed out corruption. This is your headache. But something has to be done.

Then, there is another provision that if a person applies for a passport, his passport application must be verified by a Police Inspector. If the Police Inspector does not give a certificate in time the applicant has to run after him and request him to kindly verify and kindly certify that he was not a criminal, in that case also there is a chance for corruption and money changing hands. So I would request the Minister to fix a time-limit. The then External Affairs Minister had announced that within five weeks of application the passport would be issued to the applicant. So, after an application is received in the office, within two weeks, if the police inspector or the police officer does not send the certificate of clearance, then it should be taken *suo moto* that the certificate has been obtained so that there is no further delay.

Here, I would like to mention another thing. The offices should be technologically—even, otherwise, efficiencywise—upgraded. Really, those who are working there

are incompetent people. I am sorry to say this. These offices also need a certain amount of technological upgradation.

There is another point I would like to bring to the notice of this House. India is a leader of the NAM countries, the SAARC countries and the Commonwealth Countries. Previously, no Commonwealth country or SAARC country needed a visa. Now, to go to almost every country, except Nepal and Bhutan, we need a visa. And, what is the passport for if we do not get a visa? Even to go to Pakistan, an adjacent country of ours, we need a visa. It is really a difficult problem. India is increasing the visa charges. But the passport is useless without a visa. Only recently, the United Kingdom has passed a bill whereby no young people, students or otherwise, will be allowed to go there. They do not want Indians to go there since Indians are possible migrants. The same is the case even in America. Young people are not allowed there. They are discouraged. In such cases, what will be our strategy? The External Affairs Ministry must think about it. This should be a two-way traffic. You cannot open your door for everybody, at the same time, our people not being allowed to go out for higher education, for jobs and otherwise. Why should we allow them to come in for exploiting our country? This should be a two-way traffic. You must also consider this point. As far as the NAM countries are concerned, as far as the SAARC countries are concerned, as far as the Commonwealth countries are concerned, there should be an easier method of going there and coming back. This should also be looked into. Maybe it is not part of the Bill. But I want to bring it to your notice because, maybe, you can take steps about it when you frame the rules after this Amendment Bill is passed. Thank you.

श्री छोटा साई पटेल (गुजरात) :

मैंडम डिप्टी चेरमैन, मैं पासपोर्ट एमेंडमेंट बिल, 1992 का स्वागत करता हूं और समर्थन भी करता हूं। मगर समर्थन करने के वक्त मैं चंद बातें कहना चाहूंगा।

सामान्यतः पासपोर्ट बनाने में जो समय की समस्या है वह काफी लंबी है। तो समय के बारे में जितना हो सके उतने कम समय में पासपोर्ट जारी कर दिया जाना चाहिए। कई स्टूडेंट्स को, कई बिजनेसमैन को कम समय में नया पासपोर्ट बनाना होता है लेकिन उसमें कम-से-कम तीन-चार महीने लग जाते हैं जोकि काफी टाइम है। इसके बारे में कुछ संशोधन कर के, कुछ फॉर्मलिटीज को कम कर के पासपोर्ट जल्द-से-जल्द दिए जाने चाहिए। दूसरे, नए पासपोर्ट के बारे में इसका सेक्युरिटी पेपर, प्रिटिंग और लेमीनेशन को मंद्मे नजर रखकर हम शायद इसकी फीस ज्यादा रखेंगे तो वह भी ठीक नहीं होगा। यह सब कुछ कंप्रिहेंसिव ट्रेवल से देखकर हमें पासपोर्ट फीस के बारे में सोचना पड़ेगा। इस संबंध में मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री जी के ध्यान में यह बात लाना चाहूंगा कि हमारे देश में पंजाब, गुजरात, केरल ऐसे स्टेट्स हैं जहां से कि काफी लोग दूसरे देशों में काम करने के लिए जाते हैं क्योंकि हमारे यहां अन-एम्प्लायमेंट की समस्या बहुत ज्यादा बढ़ गयी है। अब हमारे गुजरात में सिर्फ एक ही रीजनल पासपोर्ट ऑफिस अहमदाबाद में है और गुजरात में से मिनीमम 65 प्रतिशत साउथ गुजरात के हैं, साउथ गुजरात के पासपोर्ट वाले टू-थर्ड हैं। और सिर्फ वन थर्ड ही बाकी एरिया के लोग पासपोर्ट बनवाते हैं। गुजरात में सिर्फ एक ही पासपोर्ट आफिस है और वहां काम का काफी दबाव रहता है। यहां लाखों-लाख लोगों की पासपोर्ट की एप्लीकेशन पड़ी हुई है। इस समस्या से सबसे ज्यादा मैं संबंधित हूं क्योंकि कई हजारों लोग मेरे पास आते हैं, पासपोर्ट जल्दी बनवाने के लिए निवेदन करते हैं। इसलिए मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह अर्ज करना चाहूंगा, आपके माध्यम से, कि यहां अहमदाबाद में एक रीजनल पासपोर्ट आफिस है वहीं दूसरा सूरत में भी, जहां से टू-थर्ड एप्लीकेशन आती हैं, वहां भी एक रीजनल पासपोर्ट आफिस खोला जाना चाहिए। इसी तरह पंजाब में होना चाहिए, केरल में होना चाहिए, जहां भी ज्यादा एप्लीकेशन होती हैं,

यह फिंगर्स तो आपके पास हैं कि कहां ज्यादा एप्लीकेशन हैं, उसके मुताबिक वहां नया पासपोर्ट आफिस बनाने के लिये आप सोचें। यही मैं आपके माध्यम से आदरणीय मंत्री जी से अर्ज कर रहा हूं।

मैडम, दुबारा से, यह जो सही प्रावधान किया गया है, इसका स्वागत करता हूं और समर्थन करता हूं। धन्यवाद।

SHRI M. A. BABY: Madam Vice-Chairman, thank you very much for having given me this opportunity. This is more or less an innocuous Bill meant for bringing in certain changes and generally I welcome the amendments being suggested by the hon. Minister. Now, the Minister explained that one intention is to make the passport of international standard, the way in which it is brought out and things like that. I understand that this Government is basically thirsting for globalisation in all spheres of its activity and this is one area where I do not have any difference of opinion with the effort to globalise or to enhance the appearance style and I hope all of us would be in a position to travel with well brought-out passports in the near future. Madam, some hon. Members have made certain very important suggestions relating to the hardships, the difficulties, faced by those who apply for such passports. I share their sentiments, especially the point raised by my colleague, Kamla Sinha Ji, about the time taken for processing a passport and the difficulties faced by ordinary citizens. You see, for those who want to travel abroad seeking a job or something like that, the processing of passport should be done quickly, within the shortest possible time. And what happens there? I don't want to elaborate about the corruption that is involved at different levels, at the level of police verification and things like that. There should be some time stipulation very strictly and stringently followed. I hope the hon. Minister will come forward with some concrete proposal and he will ensure that this is implemented in its true spirit. When somebody applies for a passport, in

[Shrimati M. A. BABY]

the natural course, he should be in a position to get the passport. Now, what happens? Even to get a passport, he has to go to a Member of Parliament, somebody else, get recommendation done and things like that. In our country, for every common thing which a citizen should be in a position to enjoy, a recommendation is required. So, to begin with, in this field of activity at least, in the natural course, when the bona fides are found out, when the police verification is done, we should ensure that within the quickest possible time the people get the passport made. I would also like to mention one more point. There are issues related to Indians who happen to be in different countries. Along with a colleague of mine, I had an opportunity to meet some Indians in Toronto, those who have gone in different circumstances. Of course, there are some allegations regarding people who are having connections with forces who are inimical to the interests of our country. Barring such elements, there are many bona fide Indian citizens who are there. Due to different circumstances they don't have the passports with them. They have applied to the High Commission or the Consul-General in Toronto but they are subjected to many difficulties. They would be separately representing to the hon. Minister but I would just like to avail myself of the opportunity to bring this, through you, Madam, to the notice of the hon. Minister that such cases should also be properly looked into and measures should be taken to see that the interests of the Indian citizens who are working in other countries and who are earning precious foreign exchange for our country are taken care of.

श्री ईश दत्त शर्मा (उत्तर प्रदेश) : महोदया, जो बिल प्रस्तुत किया गया है, मैं इसका समर्थन करता हूँ और अधिक समय न लेते हुए केवल दो ही निवेदन करना चाहूंगा आपके माध्यम से सरकार को और मंत्री जी को कि एक तो पासपोर्ट बनाने में या पासपोर्ट प्राप्त करने में बहुत विलम्ब होता है और कभी-कभी तो बरसों समय इसमें लग

जाया करता है और इसका मुख्य कारण यह है कि प्रत्येक प्रदेश में और मैं अपने उत्तर प्रदेश की बात कहता हूँ, जो एक बड़ा प्रदेश है, जिस प्रदेश में एक स्थान पर आफिस है और पूरे प्रदेश के लोगों को वहाँ इकट्ठा होना पड़ता है अपने पासपोर्ट के लिए। उनके पास आफिसर्स कम हैं, क्लर्क कम हैं, दफ्तरो में काम करने वाले लोग कम हैं, इसलिए पासपोर्ट बनाने में विलम्ब होता है। दूसरा कारण यह है कि जब यह पासपोर्ट को फार्म जांच के लिए डिस्ट्रिक्ट हेडक्वार्टर में भेज दिए जाते हैं तो उसका बड़ा लकी प्रोसेस होता है। जांच के लिए एप्लीकेशन फार्म भजी जाती है सुपरिटेण्डेंट आफ पुलिस के पास, डिस्ट्रिक्ट का जो कप्तान होता है उसके पास भेज दी जाती है लेकिन वह एप्लीकेशन थ्री-थ्री लोकल इंटेलिजेंस यूनिट के सिपाही के पास चली जाती है और वह सिपाही फिर उसमें मौल-माव करने लगता है, सौदेबाजी करने लगता है और जो आदमी नीडी है, जो आदमी पासपोर्ट लेना चाहता है, अगर उसके खिलाफ पुलिस रिकार्ड कुछ भी नहीं है और अगर उस सिपाही को पता नहीं चला तो वह सिपाही लिब देगा कि इसके खिलाफ रिकार्ड में तो कोई अपराध दर्ज नहीं है लेकिन आम शोहरत इसकी खराब है, रेपुटेशन खराब है और फिर उसको पासपोर्ट नहीं मिलता है। फिर पासपोर्ट देने में बड़ा लम्बा समय हो जाता है पुलिस की रिपोर्ट आते-आते।

इसलिए मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री जी से दो ही निवेदन करूंगा कि पुलिस वेरिफिकेशन के लिए एक डेफिनेट पीरियड तय कर दिया जाए और कांस्टेबल इसकी जांच न करे, कम से कम

[उपसमाध्यक्ष (श्री मोहम्मद सलीम) पीठासीन हुए]

सब इंस्पेक्टर रैंक का आदमी इस बात की जांच करे, उसके करेक्टर का वेरिफिकेशन करे।

महोदय, दूसरा मेरा अनुरोध है कि रोजनल पासपोर्ट आफिसिस जो है

इसकी खांखानें बढ़ाई जाएं। हमारा उत्तर प्रदेश, जो देश का सबसे बड़ा प्रदेश है, इसमें लखनऊ में आफिस है। चार-चार सौ किलोमीटर की दूरी तय करके लोगों को जाना पड़ता है, कई हजार रुपये लगाने पड़ते हैं, फिर यह जाकर के आफिस में पहुंच पाते हैं लेकिन उसके बाद इनको बता दिया जाता है कि आपकी रिपोर्ट जितने में नहीं आई है, इसलिए आपको पासपोर्ट इश्यू नहीं किया जा सकता।

इसलिए अपनी बात समाप्त करते हुए और इस बिल का समर्थन करते हुए मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से आपके माध्यम से अनुरोध करना चाहता हूं कि पासपोर्ट एलाइज करने के बाद एक समय-सीमा निश्चित की जाए कि इतने समय में पासपोर्ट जारी कर दिया जाएगा और दूसरी प्रायता है कि पासपोर्ट आफिसिस का विकेन्द्रीकरण करिए, एक ही आफिस न रखिए, ताकि आसानी से लोगों को पासपोर्ट मुलभ हो सके। बहुत-बहुत शुक्रिया।

SHRI TINDIVANAM G. VENKATARAMAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I rise to support the Passports (Amendment) Bill with certain suggestions. Before that, I would like to mention one point. Just now when we are discussing the question of price-rise, in this Bill also we find that there is an increase in the fees. Now at least we are having an idea as to how to increase the fee, or how many rupees to increase. Perhaps, we have taken this one aspect into consideration. As the other prices are going up this may also go up. That is the point which I want to submit.

Another thing is with regard to police verification. It is really a fact, as the other hon. Members have said, that the police if they want to detain or dilly-dally or if they want to see that it is postponed for their own reasons they can do it. Therefore, there should be a time limit in the Act and the rules as suggested by one of the hon. Members. There should be a time limit in the rules making that within such and such period the police

verification should be completed, otherwise the verification has to be done either by some officer or somebody like that. The police cannot keep them waiting for ever. People should not be at the mercy of the police officers. As the Members have suggested, so much of corruption is going on there. I don't want to go into that. If there is a time limit, then it will help the people to get their passports easily. Apart from that there is an awkward position that Members of Parliament have to face when people approach them. The people who are employed in the passport offices simply say, "You go and get the signature from an M.P. and we will recommend it". When there is no column in the form and when we are not having any position at all in that respect, there is no point in asking the people to get our signature. Every people in the passport offices, from the lowest to the highest, say, "You go and get the signature of an M.P. and we will give you the passport". If we don't sign the people would think that the M.P.s. don't give even a signature; they are not recommending us. When I say that there is no column in the form, they say, "Though there is no column, Sir, the officer says, 'you get the signature from an M.P. and then we will give you the passport'". So, this position has to be taken into consideration and a column should be provided in the form so that we will have the power to certify just like others. Earlier it was there. I don't know for what reason this privilege was taken away. At least we can have that privilege and avoid the embarrassment when the people from our constituencies approach us. They should not feel that we don't even give a signature. The Minister should take into consideration this aspect while framing the rules. Regarding the aspect of issuing the passport in a dignified manner or in a global manner, I have nothing at all to say. A man who is going out of the country has to go to earn. So, don't tax him. That is my humble suggestion.

SHRI S. MADHAVAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I welcome this Bill and the objectives of this Bill. At one point of time there

[Sbri S. Madhavan]

were twelve lakh applications for passport mostly from southern States. Now, the Minister has decided to computerise the system. It is a welcome measure. But no city of the southern States has been taken for computerisation. The persons who are going out of the country are more in number from southern States. I would request the hon. Minister to consider this point. Now, what are the reasons for the delay in the passport offices? They say, there is no staff. The Government say, the fee has not been increased. Now the Government takes the power to increase the passport fee also. At one time the Chief Passport Officer, Delhi, had issued a circular to all the Regional Passport Officers, "If you want to issue the passport out of turn, you send all the applications to Delhi". Fortunately, the new Minister had come. We all wrote to him and I myself wrote to him. He had cancelled the circular. This out-of-turn business was re-entrusted to the Regional Passport Officers. I had raised a number of points and the Minister had taken some action.

Now, what about the students who are going abroad for studies? When the call comes immediately he wants the passport. Then he faces difficulty. What about exporters? If you get export orders, you have to take the orders immediately. But there is no out-of-turn facility for him. What about the newly married couples? Most of the Tamil Nadu people living in Malaysia and Singapore come and marry people here. They, the citizens of Malaysia and Singapore, have to return within a prescribed period. Within that prescribed period the wife must also go there. So, there is some difficulty. Of course, the Minister has instructed that this category also should be considered out of turn by the Regional Passport Officers. But these interim orders will not help us. What is the reason for the delay? I brought this point to the notice of the Minister but the Minister has not taken any action. The reason is, a man requires more than one passport why? Because he will not get a visa in some other country where he wants to go for some other purpose, once, twice or thrice

a year. So he immediately tampers with the passport. He wants more than one passport. What are you going to do? We have not been able to solve the problem of delay in printing of new passports. We have not been able to introduce the new passport, which cannot be tampered with. Two years back I met the Indian High Commissioner at Singapore. He told me that he had suggested to the Government of India to have a foolproof passport which cannot be tampered with. But the Government of India has not taken any action. Now most of the people going abroad are jobseekers. Every young man wants to have a passport with him, go to Bombay and purchase the visa and then go abroad. This is the situation here. My suggestion to the Minister is—I have written to him month after he took charge—we must have two categories of people. Job-seekers, lakhs of people, are waiting in the office for getting a passport and then trying for a visa. This category must be a separate category. For others like exporters, students who are prepared to pay more fees, you must have a separate category. But this is not possible now. So they are facing difficulties. Unless you categorise and separate these people, lakhs of people, applying for a passport and waiting for a visa, this problem cannot be solved. Then, regular smugglers to some countries are there. I don't want to mention the names of these countries. These people are going with a number of passports. I want that you must be able to check this. Sir, I got my passport in 1955. I had to appear before the Tehsildar with a village officer from my village and prove my identity and then the application was sent to the Regional Passport Office. That was a good practice. Now even the recommendation of MLAs and MPs has been taken away. Now these applications have been sent back to the police officers for verification. This is a new procedure which is being followed. It is not correct. Sir, before the application is sent to the Regional Passport Office, the Government must fix some responsibility on some officer. In 1955, the Tehsildar was fixed the responsibility. You appoint some sub-inspector or inspector or anybody you

like. But before the application is sent to the Passport office, this responsibility must be fixed on some officer. Otherwise, this accumulation of applications for passports cannot be solved because of the large number of seekers of jobs in other countries. Immigration comes under the Home Ministry. This is what this Ministry has written to me. But this is not so. Our Embassy is issuing a five-year multi-purpose visa. The condition is that as soon as they arrive in India, within two weeks, they must apply stating whether we are going to reside for more than six months. How is it possible? My suggestion is before six months—you fix that period—he must get the permission. As soon as he arrives he cannot get the permission. Instead of throwing the blame on the Home Ministry, I think, you must issue instructions to our Embassy to rectify this mistake. Why should Indians who come from abroad fill up emigration cards? I came to India as an MP. I was given an emigration card to be filled up. In that form it is written in one column, "why do you come to India"? What answer can I give? This form is ill there. This must be changed. Unnecessary delay in passport verification can be solved by rectifying all these things. This computerisation unwanted circulars, the category of jobseekers and other things must be looked into by the Government immediately.

DR. NARREDDY THUNASI REDDY
(Andhra Pradesh):

**"AMMA PETTAPETTADU, ADUKKU
THINANTIVVADU."**

There is a proverb in Telugu which means: 'the mother neither serves food nor allow her children to beg. What to do? The only solution is—go hungry. The proverb exactly applies to the passport officer. On one side the Government is not in a position to provide employment. It is not in a position

to provide higher education. On the other side people are saying, "You need not help. The Government need not help. But allow us to go to foreign countries to study. Allow us to go to foreign countries to seek employment." Not only that. They say that in turn they will help the Government by remitting valuable foreign exchange. So they ask, "Why don't you allow us to go to foreign countries?" Sir, there are so many resources. There is the mineral resource, the water resource and the human resource. Human resource is one of the best resources and that resource is abundant in this country. The only resource that is available in the Gulf countries is the petroleum product and with this resource the Gulf countries are dominating the world. In a similar fashion if we use the abundant human resource that is available in this country in a proper manner, we also would be able to develop. As regards passport offices, everybody knows that there is a big racket going on. Even though the fee is just Rs. 50 one ends up spending much more because of the middlemen, the brokers and also the expenditure involved in going and coming to the capital cities. Almost all the Regional Passport Offices are located in the capital cities. So a person has to travel for more than 400 to 500 miles everytime he wants a passport. You may say that he need not come to the Regional Passport Office as he can get it from the post office. You may say that. But in practice, to avoid delay he has to go to the Regional Passport Office. All this adds up. He has to incur an additional expenditure which is 20 to 30 times the fee. In Andhra Pradesh we have the mandal system. I am referring to the MROs. The MROs give income certificate. They give nativity certificates. They give caste certificates. Almost all kinds of certificates are issued by the MROs and the Tehsildars. In a similar fashion I don't understand why passports cannot be issued by them. What is the difficulty? A citizen has to get a visa and only then he can go to a foreign country. I think it would be better if the MROs or the Tehsildars were given the authority to issue passports. If that is not possible, at least

[Dr. Narreddy Thulasi Reddy]

increase the number of Regional Passport Offices. As I said earlier, in Andhra Pradesh there is only one Regional Passport Office in Hyderabad. Increase the number of Regional Passport Offices. For example, in Andhra Pradesh there are three regions—the Rayalseema region, the Telengana region and the coastal region. There should be one passport office in each of these regions. For the coastal region, you can have a passport office in Vijayawada and for the Rayalseema region, you can have it in Cuddapah. Likewise in other regions and States. Increase the number of Regional Passport Offices. Another problem is the staff pattern. On one side applications are increasing and on the other side there is a backlog. So increase the staff and computerise the passport office. There are only three passport offices which have been computerised. There is one more point regarding our Consular offices abroad. These offices while issuing visa harass innocent travellers. The Consular offices should be streamlined and rationalised. Finally, one more point. The attitude of the Government should change. It is the right of the citizen to get a passport and it is not a favour bestowed upon him by the State. With these words I conclude.

PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, so far as this Bill is concerned, I may have to repeat particularly one point referred to by Mr. Fernandes in his speech and that is regarding the issue of another passport in the name of a person having a passport earlier. In this case the provision in that the other passport should be impounded. Now the second passport, perhaps, could not be issued without fraudulent practice. If fraudulent practice is involved, perhaps, criminal action should be taken in respect of the person doing so. Therefore, whether this provision encourages this type of activity should be considered seriously. The other aspect is regarding the fee. The other aspect is with regard to the fee. Now the fee is fixed. But in the amending Bill, this has been left undefined. It would be

good if the Minister could indicate at least the maximum level of such fee under the present circumstances without incorporating it in the Bill itself. The Minister can clarify it while replying to the debate. This is only a small suggestion.

But the important point which I wanted to raise which I gave my name to participate in the discussion is about the inordinate delay in the issue of passports. The previous speaker referred to certain malpractices or the racket. I did not have many occasions to visit the Regional Passport Office in Calcutta. But I have some experience about it when I asked for a passport for my daughter. It was said that passport could be obtained in a month's time. But in my daughter's case, the wait prolonged and ultimately when I rang up the Regional Passport Officer, it was expedited, and the passport was received in no time. Now, M. Ps. and M.L.As. are not required to counter-ship the application for a passport and that is a good riddance so far as we are concerned. But it is said that in case an officer not below the rank of a Joint Secretary in a State Government and Deputy Secretary in the Government of India countersigns the application for a passport, the requirement of police verification would be dispensed with. But in the case of my daughter, the application was properly countersigned and even then police verification was carried out and there was an inordinate delay in the issue of the passport. I was told that in Calcutta Regional Office, applications in huge numbers were pending and the plea was that printed forms were not available. Then there are agents or dalaals who make life hell for the applicants. I feel the Ministry should look into these affairs while effecting certain amendments in the existing Act of 1967. Thank you.

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN (Maharashtra): I would like to raise only one point before the hon. Minister. The present fee for a passport is Rs. 50/- and the application form costs Rs. 10/-. The actual printing cost if the passport

is going to be around Rs. 65/- and the rate I am quoting from what the Security Press at Nasik said last year. I want to know as to what is going to be the amount of fee which one has to pay in future for a passport. Another point is, in future also, because you are going to use imported paper for printing the passports, the rate would increase. Due to fluctuations in prices and other things, the rate would always increase. Therefore, my question is, what would be the position at that time? Who is going to decide the new rate? Thank you.

DR. NAUNihal SINGH (Uttar Pradesh): Thank you, Sir. Mr. Vice-Chairman, I want to point out one important aspect in regard to the visas given to foreign tourists. The foreign tourists are very much annoyed because the issue of visas is delayed by the Indian embassies who have to issue them. Now, on the one side, the Government wants to encourage foreign tourists to come to this country, to augment our foreign exchange reserves. I remember a very recent case. A person was going to come from America to witness the 26th January event. The person had mentioned the date of departure as 23rd January, whereas, those people said 'You cannot go after 23rd January'. The person cried aloud. He asked 'How the hell that you do not look into what I have mentioned?'. Blindly, the date was stamped. Therefore, I would urge upon, and appeal to the hon. Minister. Kindly instruct the Indian embassies abroad to be very careful while issuing visas. There should not be any inordinate delay. They should be issued promptly. Also, the right date should be mentioned. Thank you.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I am thankful to the hon. Members who have participated in this debate and have given their very valuable suggestions.

There are many common points made by hon. Members. The first point is in regard to the delay in the issuing of passports. Mr. Vice-Chairman, I agree. It is a fact. But there are certain impediments

which come in the way and which cause the delay in the issuing of passports.

Firstly, the number of applications has increased considerably, while the staff is the same, the staff which was appointed in the year 1980. Thereafter, no extra staff has been given by the Government. The second cause of delay, as voiced by my hon. friends here, is the verification by the police. It is also a fact that it takes a long time and due to many reasons, which my friends have explained—the delay is caused.

Another thing which causes delay is, nowadays, the passports are written by hand. As I said, the number of applications is large. Passport is a very valuable document. It has to be done very carefully. It has to be checked. Therefore, this writing by hand is also a very big reason for the delay. The fourth reason is we cannot get the passport books printed from any private printing press. It is from the Nasik Government Press we get them printed. Here there has been a constraint. They have not been able to fulfil our demand and in the past...

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: They have the capacity but you are getting them printed from outside.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: I am coming to that point. I will come to the individual points later.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): Let him reply.

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: The hon. Minister is misguiding the House. The External Ministry has gone abroad and tried to get the passport books printed from outside. Unfortunately, at that time, Nasik Security Printing Press had given an offer and they were having spare capacity. This is my information.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: I would like to correct the hon. Member that we have not gone abroad for printing of the passport books. We are getting them printed only from the Nasik Press and there is no

[Shri R. L. Bhatia]

question of getting them printed from abroad.

So, the four points that are responsible for delay are: staff shortage, printing of passport books, writing of passports by hand and police verification. Hon. Members will be glad to know that we have given instructions that if within one month police verification is not coming, ignore that, issue the passport. The verification can take place later on. Let them take four months, six months or a year and if we find that the person was not fit to receive the passport, we have the right to impound the passport. But so far as the police verification is concerned, there won't be any delay in the issue of a passport. That is one point which I wanted to explain.

SHRI S. MADHAVAN: They must get the verification on the application itself. This will avoid delay.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: No, that rule should be there, but we will wait for one month. And if within one month his verification does not come back...

SHRI S. MADHAVAN: You know how the police officers work.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: That is why I have fixed the time-limit. If it comes within a period of one month, it is all right. Otherwise it will be issued automatically.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI Md. SALIM): The Instructions have already been sent to the regional offices?

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: One month means from the day of receiving the application and the issuance of the passport. In between it will be only one month?

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Yes.

The other improvement is that I had requested the Finance Ministry and they

have allowed me 400 new posts for the passport offices. As soon as those 400 people join, the situation will improve.

PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA:

Is it not a budget secret?

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: The posts have already been sanctioned. I have requested the Home Ministry to send me 400 people because I cannot recruit people.

The third point is, that the Nasik Press has agreed to meet with our demand. Formerly, we required printing of less than a million passport books, now the demand is for more than two and a half million, and it is increasing every year. So, they have agreed. They have imported their machinery and they are now ready to meet our total demand. So, there is no question of shortage of passport books and also there is no question of getting them printed from abroad.

One point made by hon. friends was, why there are only three offices that have been computerised, why not others also. There was a constraint of funds. Now when the fees are increased, my hands will be strengthened and more offices will be computerised.

One more general point which was raised by some of my friends from U.P. and Hyderabad also, related to opening of more passport offices. We need more Passport Offices because the present ones cannot effectively cater to people who have to come from very far-off distances. In order to obviate that, the moment this Bill is passed and I get the money, I will certainly have more offices as suggested by many friends here. For instance, Mr. Chhotubhai Patel has suggested Surat and some other places.

SHRI HIPHEI (Mizoram): For the whole of the North-Eastern region we have only one Passport Office at Guwahati. There should be some more in that region.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: That is what I am suggesting. So, when the fees are increased and I have enough money, I will certainly consider opening more offices. But I will certainly, first, take care of the areas where there is great pressure, like in Kerala. There is tremendous pressure in Kerala and Maharashtra.

SHRI MOHD. KHALEELUR RAHMAN (Andhra Pradesh): Hyderabad also.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Yes, Hyderabad, and Punjab also. These are the four areas where there is tremendous pressure.

SHRI CHHOTUBHAI PATEL: Ahmedabad also.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Yes, Ahmedabad also. All these areas will be taken into consideration when you will be kind enough to pass this Bill and strengthen my hands.

Sir, we have made some other improvements also. Some suggestions have been made with regard to students, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, engineers and, especially workers. Our poor workers have to go abroad for jobs and all that, and their applications are delayed. We have given instructions to our Passport Officers that against a definite letter of a student that he has been admitted to a particular university abroad, no Passport Officer need to approach Delhi or get instructions but should immediately issue the passport to the student. Similarly, workers and labourers who get jobs abroad, if they have got definite letters of appointment in their hands, no delay will be there; instructions have been given to the Passport Officers to issue passports to them immediately without any delay.

AN HON. MEMBER: In how many days?

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: You may take it as eight, 10 or 15 days. When instructions are there, they are bound to do it... (Interruptions)... Similarly, engineers and doctors who have to go out for seminars and meetings, because the dates are fixed, if they have a certificate in hand, the Passport Officer will not

refuse to issue passports to them and he will give them the passports immediately.

Now, a new suggestion has been made by Mr. Madhavan—that newly married girls should also be given passports immediately.

SHRI CHHOTUBHAI PATEL: Top priority!

SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Only men are allowed because they do not allow girls to take their husbands. But they allow girls to marry men from outside.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: We will try to help, but the visa people do not help. A bride has to wait for three years, according to the rules, before she can join her husband outside. I am trying for people from my constituency, but they are not listening to me. But I will certainly look into this proposal.

Sir, in order to reduce the delay, we are also trying to change the system. Formerly, passports were issued for three years. Now we are issuing them for 10 years so that a person need not come to us after every three years and create more work for us. In order to lighten that, we have lengthened the life of a passport to 10 years.

Sir, mainly these are the points which my hon. friends have raised.

PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA: What about fees?

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Regarding fees, my submission is that it is difficult for me to say outright that if I have these fees it would be all right, because the costs are increasing every year and I do not know how many more offices I will have to open because my friends—everybody—have been saying that in their States there should be two or three Passport Offices. Certainly we want to open more offices. It has not been evaluated as yet, but I can assure you that this is a service department—we do not want to have any profit out of it; we want to serve the people. The fees will be reasonable, and within the framework which you have suggested—I have taken note of your suggestion—the fees will be reasonable. So, broadly these are the points, which were raised and I have

[Shri R. L. Bhatia] replied to them. My suggestion is that if this Bill is passed, I am sure, there will be more efficiency in the issuing of passports, and we will be able to make them of an international standard because with the passports which are written by hand when those people go outside, other countries create difficulties because it is not sometimes legible, sometimes it is not clear. People find a lot of difficulties. So, we have decided to have them of an international standard. For that there will be more cost.

Sir, one more point was raised by many friends. That is about corruption. It is true that formerly the persons who were issuing application forms, the staff, the travel agents were all trying to cheat people. But now what we have decided is that we have abolished this system of travel agents. They were a source of corruption. They would take money from people, charge Rs. 500 or Rs. 1,000 for getting an application made. Now we have decided that the travel agents system should go. We will not give them passports. As applicants, like any other applicant, they can collect applications from people and pass them on to our office. But we will not give them passports. We are sending passports to the people by post now. So, there is no middleman now who can cheat them or take money when the passport is issued.

Secondly, I have decided that the passport application forms should be made available in post offices. They used to go to a court or to the Passport Office. As some friends suggested, extra money was charged from them. In order to avoid that, I have sent the application forms to the post offices. People need not go to big towns or far-off places. They can get them from the local post offices, fill them and send them by post. They will get their passports by post. So, that other thing has been done. In order to avoid corruption, these methods have been adopted. The travel agents system has been abolished. The post offices have been utilised for giving application forms.

Police verification, after a month, will be treated as having been completed.

So, these are the points. Now I request all the Members to pass this Bill.

SHRI S. MADHAVAN: One more important point. One lakh applications are pending. An exporter would want to go outside immediately to get an order. But he has to stand in a queue, and one lakh applications are pending. That is why I suggested that you should separate this category from job-seekers—job-seekers are lakhs of people—and charge more for these people.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Sir, I have explained to you that any exporter who has got an established order with him, like a student or a lecturer who has got an order for a job, will be immediately attended to, and the passport will be issued at the earliest. Five, seven categories I have mentioned to you. Teachers, Intellectuals who are going out to attend seminars, students who have got definite admissions outside and the workers or labourers who have got letters of jobs, all these categories will be attended to immediately.

Thank you, Mr Vice-Chairman.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): Now the question is:

That the Bill further to amend the Passports Act, 1967, as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

The motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI Md. SALIM): We shall now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 10 were added to the Bill. Clause 1 (Short title and commencement)

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI Md. SALIM): Now we shall take up Clause 1. There is one amendment by Mr. R. L. Bhatia.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Sir, I move:

That at page 1, line 3, for the figure "1992" the figure "1993" be substituted.

Sir, this amendment is general in nature. What we have provided for is more realistic. I request hon. Members to look into it. They will find it more appropriate that this should be there.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): Now the question is:

That clause 1, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

The motion was adopted.

Clause 1, as amended, was added to the Bill.

4.00 P.M.

Enacting Formula

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): Now, we take up the Enacting Formula. There is one amendment by Mr. R. L. Bhatia.

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: Sir, I move.

That at page 1, line 1, for the word "Forty-third" the word "Forty-fourth" be substituted.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): Now, the question is:

That the Enacting Formula, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

The motion was adopted.

The Enacting Formula, as amended, was added to the Bill.

The Title was added to the Bill

SHRI R. L. BHATIA: I move:

That the Bill, as amended, be passed.

The motion was adopted.

THE PUBLIC RECORDS BILL, 1992
THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): I beg to move:

The the Bill to regulate the management, administration and preservation of public records of the Central Government, Union territory Administrations, public sector undertakings, statutory bodies and corporations, commissions and committees constituted by the Central Government or a Union territory Administration and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be taken into consideration.

Sir, I beg your leave to place before the Members of the House a Bill on Public Records for consideration and approval. This Bill had been introduced in the House on 20th August, 1992.

Public records have so far been managed, preserved and made accessible under executive instructions alone. Their basic deficiency is that they are liable to change very easily. We have, no doubt, Destruction of Records Act of 1917 on the Statute Book. But it is of a very limited nature and it does not oblige the concerned authorities to discharge any function concerning destruction of records. Besides, it does not cover all public documents. It is, therefore, proposed to overcome this deficiency through a legal instrument, which is before you for consideration.

There has been a persistent demand from the public for a suitable law concerning the public records. The Indian Historical Records Commission, which is a advisory body with the Government and has a very large component of Scholars and Archivists on it, has repeatedly emphasised the need for such a law. Members of Parliament and its different Committees have also recommended a similar action.

Encouraged by all-round public demand, the Government adopted an Archival policy Resolution in 1972,