

That the Bill be passed.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

The recently reconstituted North-Eastern Council

SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE (Assam): Sir, I rise to speak on the functioning of the North-Eastern Council. The North-Eastern Council was set up under an Act of Parliament in the year 1972. We did not have eight States, at that time, in the North-Eastern Region. At present, there are eight States in the North-Eastern Region. Again, the scope of the Council was expanded through an amendment of the Act in 2002 and that amendment provided that the NEC will be functioning as a regional planning body for the North-East and that it will formulate specific projects and schemes for the benefit of all those States. In addition, the NEC was also given the task of monitoring and suggesting steps for improvement in the Region. Subsequently, an 11-member committee was formed under the chairmanship of Shri P.P. Srivastava, a retired IAS officer, and he made many recommendations for the revamping of the North-Eastern Council. Sir, when the UPA Government came to power and Dr. Manmohan Singh became the Prime Minister—Madam Sonia Gandhi is the Chairperson of the UPA,— he has taken very good steps, in this regard. The Government wants to revamp and revitalise the North-Eastern Council. Accordingly, the hon. Prime Minister has sanctioned more money for the North-Eastern Council. But, the North-Eastern Council is not functioning properly. Sir, only in March, 2005, our hon. Minister for Development of North Eastern Region was made the Chairman of the North-Eastern Council. The North-Eastern Council is very much dependent on the State Governments and there is no proper action plan. There are eight States under the North-Eastern Council. Sir, three-four days in this House, Shri Lalit Suri put a question about the utilisation of funds in the North-East. In reply to that, the hon. Minister said that the utilisation of funds by the State Governments is not monitored by the Central Ministry, and there is a problem for him to ensure proper utilisation of funds under the various schemes. He explained it in the House. Sir, the hon. prime Minister is very unhappy about the non-implementation of projects in the North-East. This is the golden opportunity for the North-Eastern Region to develop through the North-Eastern Council

and the DONER. The hon. Minister should take proper steps to utilise the sanctioned money under various schemes in the North-Eastern Region. The hon. Minister is well aware of the position of the North-Eastern region. There are no roads, communication network, etc. The people of the region are not getting medical benefits, etc. There is no proper development of infrastructure in the region. So many new schemes are under process but they have not been fully implemented. Some roads have been laid; some projects have been implemented. But, various projects have not been implemented fully. The hon. Minister is aware of the position obtaining in the North-East. There is the question of security of the people. The region is facing the problem of militancy. The frustrated youths have taken to arms. At present, the position of the North-East is like Kashmir. So, I want to suggest some points for consideration of the hon. Minister.

Sir, before finalising the priority list of projects under the Scheme of Non-Lapsable Central Pool Resources, Members of Parliament from the North-Eastern States should be consulted, and their suggestions with respect to developmental projects about their States should be unincorporated, before they are forwarded to the Centre. Sir, it is surprising that, at present, from the eight States of the North-East, there are nearly 39 Members of Parliament, but they are never consulted. We don't know what the functions of the North-Eastern Council are. The present Government, under the direction of the hon. Prime Minister, is taking some firm steps. The projects should be implemented early. So, this is one of my suggestions.

Secondly, before finalising the regional planning for sustainable growth and development of the region, the Council should take into account an integrated view of the overall development of the North-Eastern Region, rather than individual development of a particular State in the area.

Thirdly, the North-Eastern Council should draw up a roadmap for harnessing the vast potential of the region in the fields of agriculture, including horticulture, floriculture, medicinal herbs and bamboo, water resources, minerals, etc. There are many such projects which, if implemented, would increase the income level of the families in the rural and hilly regions. In this work, the Council should act in close cooperation with the State Governments and the Central Planning Commission.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA) in the Chair]

The Council should draw up an action plan and formulate a vision

document with a 15 years perspective for the growth of the region. I understand that some initiative has already been taken in this regard and if so I would like to know the details thereof.

The North-Eastern States should have a common approach for their infrastructure development like power and water resources. The Council should try to give an effective leadership in this regard. The NEC should put pressure on the Central Government to extend for another ten years the exemption from income-tax which was introduced in the year 1996-97 for ten years. Now it is going to be dropped on 31st March, 2005. So, we have already pressed the NEC to take initiative on the exemption to the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited. I think, the Minister should take up the matter with the Central Government.

The NEC should continuously monitor the implementation of order issued by the Central Government to all its Ministries and Departments that ten per cent of the Budget allocation of every Ministry has to be spent on the North Eastern Regional Development projects. Sir, about spending of this ten per cent, we know nothing. We do not know whether the fund for all Departments and Ministries is being earmarked as per the directions given by the Central Government. As I know, so far, all the Departments are not giving this ten per cent money to this Ministry. The Minister should take initiative and give details to all Members of the North Eastern States. We must know.

Finally, the problem of unemployment in the North-Eastern Region has assumed serious proportion and unless some contingent plan is initiated to identify the avenues of employment in the region, all our planning will be meaningless. I suggest that the NEC should immediately draw up an action plan in consultation with all the State Governments and Members of Parliament from these States.

Sir, the Council should begin its working right earnest to tackle the problems of development and security, simultaneously, because lasting peace and progress of the region depends on how effectively we can solve these twin problems.

With these words, I end my speech, but before I do so, I want to thank the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh and Madam Soniagi, Chairperson of the UPA for their active interest in the development of the region. Thank you.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR (Tripura): Sir, it is a happy occasion that the reconstitution of North-Eastern Council is being discussed here. The North-Eastern region is a backward region. Moreover, it is a vulnerable region of the country. But the region has its uniqueness. It is unique of its kind. It is isolated from the main land of the country surrounded by different foreign countries. The only corridor with the main land is along the foot of the Himalayan range, through West Bengal. But the region has characteristics of its own. If we observe the entire region, we see that there live people of different types, different castes. They speak in different languages. Their religions are also different. Their culture is different and a particular area having a distinct culture is different from the other area and the States are also having their own characteristic. They are bound by hill tracts, by rivers, by streams. All these have given these regions a unique character. We may call the North-Eastern Region in miniature. When we speak we say that the motto of India is 'unity in diversity'. The same thing occurs in North-Eastern Regions. Sir, I would like to throw some light on the economy of the North-Eastern Region. Population is about four crores, the birth rate is almost the same as the average of India. In respect of literacy, the North-Eastern Region is running about four per cent higher than the average in India. When we go through the figures we see that the percentage of BPL, in almost all the States is higher than the average norms of India, except in Mizoram. There is good news in the health sector. In the health sector we have seen, IMR, the Infant Mortality rate is about half of the Indian norms. So it may be backward but it has some specialities. The Region is rich in natural resources, oil, gas or hydropower potential, forest wealth. In these areas the Region is very rich, the people has got speciality. The talented people are there in handicrafts, handloom and handicrafts, in cottage industries, in digenous industries, in culture, in folk dance and other cultural activities and they are winning national awards also from that region. But in spite of all these qualities, the Region is dependent on the Centre. Why? Sir, 87 per cent revenue comes from the Centre. Only 13 per cent comes from different States. Why? It is because tax revenue is very limited. All the States are predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribe area and the people of Scheduled Tribes do not pay tax. They need not have to pay tax. That is why revenue is very limited. In regard to non-tax revenue, there is no industry. Agriculture is not developed to such an

extent. Power potential is not harnessed. Transport problem is there. People from one State cannot get to another State even and there is insurgency. Sir, that is why the non-taxation revenue is also limited. This is the reason why the North-Eastern Council has been formed with a special outlook to see to the development of that region and when it was established and how gradually the Act was amended, the hon. Member Shri Karnendu Bhattacharjee has said and I would not like to go deep into it. The objectives of the NEC are to secure balanced management, to maintain coordination, to accelerate the programmes in irrigation, flood control, transport, power, roads and bridges, industry, education, water supply. These are the areas where stress has to be given. These are the areas on which we have to stress. We are proud that our hon. Prime Minister is coming from the North-East. There is another good news that the Chairman of the NEC is our hon. Minister of the DONER. Previously, the Governors were heading the NEC. Now, the democratic leaders are heading the NEC. So, we think, the NEC will come out of the bureaucratic red tapism. Why I say this ? I say this because this task of revitalisation has been taken up. Sir, the NEC has been given the status of the regional trading body. It has the power to function as the advisory body as well. The NEC has the power. But, in practice, what we see is this. This year, a Budgetary provision of Rs. 1136.8 crores was proposed by the NEC. But the figure, according to the Planning Commission's decision, has come down to Rs. 585 crores only. It has been half of the proposal sent by the NEC. There is a proverb. "Man proposes; God disposes." So, the NEC proposes; Planning Commission disposes. Though I have no faith in God, I have to say this because this is a proverb.

Looking into all these aspects, another decision has been taken in 1998 for creation of a Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources Fund so that the funds do not get lapsed. There is a directive that each Ministry should contribute 10 per cent of its budget to this fund. So far, huge amount has been accumulated in this Fund. I agree with what Shri Karanenduji has said. I think all the departments are not contributing their share of 10 per cent to this Fund. What is the figure ? The figure is this. After inception of the NLCPR, the total projects approved from different States come to the figure 616 ...(*Time-bell*)... Sir, I require three to four more minutes. Sir, 616 projects were approved and the accumulated money is Rs. 4,001.01 crores. Look at the releases. What are the releases ? So far, only Rs. 2979.88 crores has been released. I have told about the NEC and

3.00 P.M.

the NLCPR. What are the bottlenecks ? First of all, projects have to be approved. This is one step. The second step is allocation of funds. The Planning Commission should have to be in line with the NEC. The third step is release of funds and the fourth steps is application of funds, execution of programmes. So, these are four to five steps that needed to be taken up. If any of these 'steps' is slipped, the fate would be like that of Babar. He slid down the steps and died. That is why what we need is that the NEC should come out of the bureaucratic red-tapism. Now, this is an opportunity for us to do something since the NEC has been reconstituted. And our most respected Minister, Mr. P.R. Kyndiahji, is heading the NEC. We aspire that this red-tapism will come to an end. Sir, it is a very sad state of affairs that the projects recommended by the States are not considered by the NEC. I am giving the examples. Sir, in the State of Tripura, 73 projects have been recommended. But only 27 projects have been accepted, and 46 projects have either been turned down or have been kept aside. There are very important projects like development of G.B. Hospital, which we like to convert into a medical college. Every year, hundreds of our students are moving in different parts of India to procure a medical seat. We have the capacity to build up a medical college in our State. But the funds are not available.

Now I come to the issue of cold storage. Our farmers produce potatoes, pineapple etc. in abundance. There was a proposal for four cold storage projects. Proposals for three cold storage projects have been kept aside. The approval has not been given.

Such important projects as setting up Bio-fertilizer Production Centre, Barmura Power Project (II) of 21 MW capacity, etc. have to be considered. There is one mysterious fact which I would like to mention here. During the Tenth Five Year Plan, the Plan period is going on now-not a single road from Tripura has been accepted for inclusion in the Tenth Five Year Plan. How can it be that a state, having the second largest population in the North East, has been totally deleted from the Tenth Five Year Plan in respect of roads which is a priority sector...*(interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): You have to finish your speech now.... *(Interruptions)*...

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, as regards the power projects, the hydro power potentiality prevailing there is above 34,000 MW. But, what do we see? About 7-8 projects in Arunachal Pradesh are lying pending. Different

projects in Assam are not in progress. In Manipur one project is now likely to be dropped. So, if this goes on, how power will be harnessed from hydro-power projects? Now to conclude...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): Mr. Sarkar, you have taken a long time.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, I will take one minute more. Sir, I would like to throw some light on the problem of unemployment. We should not ignore the fact why Assam was divided. Why Assam broke up into five States? Why a section of the youths of the North East have taken to arms? What are the reasons? If we do go deep into it, we find that the reasons are two-fold. One is backwardness. I agree with it. Another reason is, the divisive forces, communal forces and foreign agencies are all working in this region to pick up the youths, to take some of them to Bangladesh or Myanmar to give them training and to send them back to create bloodshed in the region. Why are they doing this? It is out of frustration. There is lack of confidence in a section of the youth.

The UPA Government, which has come here with a great hope, we aspire that these things should be taken into consideration. The frustration, the loss of confidence among some of the sections, this should be worked out, this should be removed. How can it be that in the Indian Airlines, you do not find men from the North East? In the Railways, men from the North East are negligible. In ONGC and in all Central Public Undertakings this is the position. So, I emphasise that in this country ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): You please conclude now.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: I request the Government to see that in case of recruitment from the North East, their proportion in the Central Sectors should be increased. With these words, I thank you, Sir.

श्री० राम देव भंडारी (बिहार): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं उत्तर पूर्व के राज्यों का निवासी नहीं हूँ, मगर उनके पड़ोस में रहता हूँ। उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, हम उत्तर पूर्व के इन राज्यों को "सेवन सिस्टर्स" के नाम से जानते हैं। ...*(व्यवधान)*...

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री संतोष बागड़ोदिया): भंडारी जी, सिक्किम राज्य भी शामिल हो गया है और अब ये ऐट सिस्टर्स हैं।

प्रो० राम देव भंडारी: सर, मैं आपकी बात से सहमत हूँ। अब सिक्किम स्टेट भी इनमें आ गया है और ये ऐट सिस्टर्स हो गई हैं। लेकिन हम इनको वर्षों से “सेवन सिस्टर्स” के नाम से जानते रहे हैं। यह बहुत खूबसूरत क्षेत्र है। यहां पर बड़ी-बड़ी नदियां हैं, खूबसूरत पहाड़ हैं, जंगल हैं, हरे-भरे खेत हैं, फूलों की क्यारियां हैं और वहां रहने वाले नर और नारी भी बड़े खूबसूरत हैं, पवित्र हृदय के हैं। इस प्रकार का यह क्षेत्र है। भारत का कोई ऐसा कोना नहीं है, जहां के लोगों को ये प्रदेश ललचाते नहीं हैं, अपनी ओर आकर्षित नहीं करते हैं। ऐसा बहुत कुछ भौगोलिक कारणों से है। प्राकृतिक साधनों से भरपूर, प्रचुर मात्रा में प्राकृतिक साधन रहने के बावजूद, भौगोलिक कारणों से, इन प्रदेशों का जितना समुचित विकास होना चाहिए था, वह विकास नहीं हुआ है। मैंने पहले कहा कि पूर्वोत्तर क्षेत्र प्राकृतिक साधनों से भरपूर है। अभी माननीय सदस्य ने कम्युनिकेशन की, रेल की सुविधा, सड़क की सुविधा के बारे में कहा है। वहां पर हवाई सुविधा बढ़ी है, लेकिन देश के बाकी क्षेत्रों से जितना सम्पर्क इन प्रदेशों का होना चाहिए, वह सम्पर्क नहीं हो रहा है और यही कारण है कि इन प्रदेशों का जितना समुचित विकास होना चाहिए था, वह नहीं हुआ है। इसी का लाभ या दुरुपयोग कहें, तो वहां उन प्रदेशों में उग्रवादी संगठनों ने, अलगाववादी संगठनों ने इसका दुरुपयोग किया।

उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, इन्हीं सब समस्याओं को देखते हुए पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् का गठन हुआ। पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् के गठन का मुख्य उद्देश्य समन्वय का काम करना और इन सभी राज्यों का सर्वांगीण विकास करना है। वहां के विकास की जिम्मेदारी इस पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् के ऊपर है। मगर पिछले वर्षों में जो अनुभव हुआ है, इनके कार्यों की जो समीक्षा हुई है, इससे पता चलता है कि केन्द्र से राज्यों को जो फंड मिला, उसको बांटने का काम जरूर किया, मगर सर्वांगीण विकास के काम में सहयोग देने की जो इनकी भूमिका थी, उस भूमिका का इन्होंने निर्वाह नहीं किया।

उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, दो इश्यु इन राज्यों के हैं, एक तो विकास का इश्यु है और दूसरा शांति-व्यवस्था कायम करने का इश्यु है। जब तक इन राज्यों में शांति व्यवस्था कायम नहीं होगी तब तक इन राज्यों का निरंतर विकास नहीं हो पायेगा। प्रधानमंत्री जी गुवाहाटी गये थे, मणिपुर भी गये थे और केन्द्र की ओर से प्रधानमंत्री जी ने एक किले से, मणिपुर के एक किले से, मैं इस किले का नाम याद नहीं कर पा रहा हूँ, केन्द्र के अंतर्गत वह किला था, प्रधानमंत्री जी ने वह किला उन राज्यों की जनता के सुपुर्द कर दिया। इतना ही नहीं किया, उसके सौंदर्यीकरण के लिए भी उन्होंने काफी कोष दिया। महोदय, शिलौंग में एम्स की तर्ज पर उत्तर पूर्व इंदिरा गांधी आयुर्विज्ञान संस्थान का निर्माण किया जा रहा है। उत्तर पूर्वी राज्यों से, बिहार से भी, भारी संख्या में लोग एम्स में इलाज के लिए आते हैं, मुम्बई भी जाते हैं। इतनी दूर से इलाज के लिए आना और रोगी को लाना बहुत मुश्किल है। यह जो आयुर्विज्ञान संस्थान का निर्माण शिलौंग में होने जा रहा है, यह भी उन राज्यों के

लिए, उन राज्यों की जनता के लिए केन्द्र की ओर से एक सौगात की तरह दिया जा रहा है और इससे उनको बहुत लाभ होगा। उन राज्यों में रहने वाले जो बीमार लोग हैं, उनको वहां से चिकित्सा की सुविधा मिलेगी।

महोदय, हम शांति के लिए प्रयास कर रहे हैं। प्रधानमंत्री जी ने कहा है कि भारत के संविधान के अंतर्गत, इसकी एकता, अखंडता, सम्प्रभुता के अंतर्गत कोई भी उग्रवादी संगठन या अलगाववादी संगठन अगर बात करना चाहे तो केन्द्र सरकार उसका स्वागत करती है मगर मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि इसके अतिरिक्त अगर कोई अलगाववादी संगठन या उग्रवादी संगठन किसी शर्त पर हमसे बात करना चाहता है तो हम उसकी शर्त को मंजूर नहीं करेंगे और कठोर कार्यवाही करेंगे। अगर वे वार्ता नहीं करना चाहते हैं तो उनके खिलाफ कठोर कार्यवाही करेंगे। महोदय, आईएसआई की गतिविधियां भी वहां पर हैं। जिस तरह से उल्फा को दबाने में भूटान ने हमारी मदद की और आज असम में यह हालत है कि उल्फा के नेता भाग करके बंगलादेश में पड़े हुए हैं। पड़ोसी राज्यों से भी हमें बात करनी चाहिए। अगर उन राज्यों में अलगाववादी एवं उग्रवादी तत्वों को संरक्षण मिल रहा है तो उनसे हमें बात करनी चाहिए और वे संरक्षण न दे। दो तरह की बातें हैं, एक तो विकास का रास्ता है, बड़े-बड़े उद्योग वहां अभी नहीं हैं, लेकिन गृह उद्योग, कुटीर उद्योग, रेशम का काम बड़े पैमाने पर होता है, वहां बड़ी खूबसूरत चीजें बनती हैं—उन उद्योगों को बढ़ावा देना है। वहां जो सामान बनता है, उसकी मार्केटिंग की व्यवस्था करनी है। इन सारी बातों की जिम्मेदारी पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् की है। इन सबके लिए योजना बनानी है, योजना का कार्यान्वयन करना है एक प्रकार से उन क्षेत्रों के लिए मिनि योजना आयोग की भूमिका उनको निभानी है। मैं आशा करता हूँ कि जो पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् के उद्देश्य हैं, जिसे पाने में अभी तक सफलता नहीं मिली है।

[श्री उपसभापति पीठासीन हुए]

आगे हम आशा करते हैं कि इसके कार्यों को, पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् के कार्यों को, जो उसका उद्देश्य है पूरा करेगी। उस उद्देश्य को पूरा करने की दिशा में केन्द्र सरकार की ओर से भी आवश्यक मदद मिलेगी और पूर्वोत्तर परिषद् अपने लक्ष्य को पूरा करेगी। इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूँ। धन्यवाद।

SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH (Assam): Sir, North-Eastern parts of this country are one of the beautiful areas. As hon. Member just now narrated the beauty of the North-Eastern Region. But, at the same time, this part of the country is economically backward, and after many years of Independence this part of this great country is not in a position to come at par with other parts of this country. There are a lot of measures taken by the Government of India and State Governments to improve the situation.

But even after these measures taken by the Central Government, this part is, even today, an under-developed area economically. Sir, one of the reasons for setting up of this North-Eastern Council is to see and look after the development of the region. With this view, this Act came into force in 1971 and NAC started functioning in 1972. This Act was originally for the Advisory Body. It was amended in 2002. After amendment, this North-Eastern Council has become a regional planning body and there are some other amendments also. After these amendments to this Act, the Chief Ministers of eight States have also become members of the North-Eastern Council. But, Sir, the North-Eastern Council should accept that the situation has not improved till now. This is not only my opinion, but this is the opinion of most of the people of North-East, and also the leaders of our country, which I will refer to later on. Sir, it being a regional planning body, its duty is to see as to how planning can be done and by which way two or more States can be benefited. But there are certain problems, which I would like to mention here. No doubt that two or more States should be benefited by the planning of the North-Eastern Council, but if we look at the population pattern of the North-Eastern Region, as my hon. colleague, Shri Matilal Sarkar, has mentioned, their population may be little more than 4 crores, and more than half of the population is from Assam. So, Assam is the largest State in the North-Eastern Region. Not only that, Tripura, Manipur and Sikkim were not the districts of Assam. Other parts of the North-Eastern Region which are now States like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya were once parts of undivided Assam. So, at the time of planning, if you look at the benefits of only two or more States, I believe, the major State, Assam, has scope of losing certain things. So, I would like to urge upon the hon. Minister, who is also the Chairman of the North-Eastern Council, to consider this point that, at the time of planning, Assam's interests should not be neglected because Assam is the gateway of the North-Eastern Region, and Assam is the major State where more than half of the population is residing. This is one of the points which I would like to mention before the hon. Minister. Sir, at the time of planning, we have to look at the heritage of the North-Eastern Region. As my hon. colleague Mr. Sarkar said, if you look to North-Eastern Region, it is a 'mini India'. There are so many castes, creeds and tribes residing in the North Eastern Region, and, I believe, we are residing here united with all friendship and brotherhood. Sir, because we are all together, we are concerned with

the development of North-Eastern Region, and, there is no difference amongst us irrespective of the States to which we belong.

Sir, the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA Government also mentioned that the North-Eastern Council would be strengthened and given adequate professional support. Sir, when we go for planning, we must have professional experts. I believe as on today, the North-Eastern Council is not strengthened that way with economists and other professional men for better planning for the North Eastern Region. Sir, unless we have professional planners, who are technical experts in those lines, we cannot have good plan for the development of the North-Eastern Council.

The Chairperson of the UPA, Shrimati Sonia Gandhi was so interested for the development of this region that she immediately included 'Strengthening of the North-Eastern Council' in the Common Minimum Programme for the development of North-Eastern Region. But, I believe, as on today, the North-Eastern Council is not in a position to exploit that which has been included in the Common Minimum Programme. So, we should try to have those facilities, which the UPA Government wants to give.

Another point, which I would like to raise, is that our hon. Prime Minister is a Member of Rajya Sabha from the State of Assam. We are proud that he takes a lot of interest for the development of Assam and North-Eastern Region. He is personally interested for the development of Assam and the North-Eastern Region. Even after that, this North-Eastern Council is not in a position to achieve its goals. To achieve its goals, what should they get, and, what benefits should go to the North-Eastern Region, enough has not been done. That is a matter of sorrow.

Sir, this is not only my opinion, I would like to quote what our Prime Minister said in the 58th meeting of the North-Eastern Council. Lamenting that the North-Eastern Council has fallen short of expectations to deliver as the apex regional planning body, hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh said, "issues relating to economic development and security concerns should get the same kind of priority while ensuring rapid development of the region". This is the statement of our hon. Prime Minister that he gave in the 58th NEC meeting. Not only that, he further said, "I am sad that a lot of effort still needs to be made to revitalise this body and make it capable of fulfilling its original mandate."

Sir, as on today, we should have achieved the mandate but we are not in a position to do so. (*Time-bell*). Sir, I am concluding in one minute. I won't take much of your time.

Sir, it does not mean that I am only criticising all those things. There are certain things, which have been achieved by the efforts of the NEC, particularly in road communication, air-connectivity, assistance to industry, and also in sectors such as education, health, power and agriculture. Certain things have been done by the NEC till now. But this is not sufficient as on today. This is not sufficient. I think that the NEC should come to the expectations of the people of the North-Eastern Region. And, when the Government of India is interested to help us, when the Prime Minister is interested to help us, there should not be any hurdle in our receiving our things in time. So, I expect that the NEC will come forward for the betterment, for the economic development, of the North-Eastern Region. With these words, since you are saying me to conclude, I would like to conclude. Thank you, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dr. Malaisamy, how much time will you take ?

DR. K. MALAISAMY (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I will be extra considerate with the Chair and the Members from the North-Eastern States by reducing my time and leaving more time for them. While on the subject I could not resist but to speak out the inherent, peculiar, special problems that are faced by the North-Eastern States. In terms of security, in terms of law and order, due to insurgency, militancy, on the one side, and enormous unemployment among youth, then non taking off of the developmental activities in North-Eastern States and fourthly, the natural calamities that are happening due to earthquake or floods, these are all the inherent problems. Thanks to these problems, the fact remains that the North-Eastern states are backward. Due to their own making or due to the neglect of others, it is a point of determination. Sir, to join the team, other Members, I just touch and go about the background of these North-Eastern States.

This region was originally a Department and then it was upgraded to a Ministry. Before that, the North-Eastern Council, which was constituted as early as 1971 under an Act and it was, as said by many Members, doing the function more of an advisory body. Then, an amendment was brought in and it was made a statutory planning body, in the sense, instead

of being an advisory body, it was made a functional body in terms of planning, preparing and performing, reviewing and coordinating with all authorities. Sir, after the NEC, I mean, under it, there was an 11-member committee which was doing in detail all areas of NEC. Sir, as far as the North-Eastern States are concerned, I am reminded of a small incident in the style of functioning of a mother with her few children. When there are several children in the family, when some of them are able-bodied, some of them are okay and one or two are sick and disabled, what the normal mother do? Instead of looking after the able-bodied children, she will concentrate on the handicapped, or, the sick child. In such a way, special care is to be done for the North-Eastern States, we are all out. But, unfortunately. ...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dr. Malaisamy, because of your offer that you are going to give your time to others, I have two more Members from North-Eastern States.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: I will take two minutes, Sir.

SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, in Tamil Nadu ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, no, please don't bring that into this.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, it has become a nuisance. Why don't they listen to what I am going to say? When I say about the mother, they think only about the mother of our Tamil Nadu. There are several mothers. It very much applies to the mother of our Tamil Nadu.

Now, I come to the performance of the NEC. The Chair and the hon. Members will take note of it that the performance of the North-Eastern Council is not at all up to the mark. Since its inception, there were financial irregularities, red tapism, and other lapses. Sir, it is on record that as many as Rs. 4000 crores have been given, but the impact of this investment was insignificant. That is the reality of the situation. About Rs. 4000 crores were dumped, but the effect of it was insignificant. Sir, in such a situation as this, what can be done? Sir, I will take only two minutes. One right step was taken by the successive Governments, and also under the Common Minimum Programme, by giving due priority and importance to it. Sir, when you look here and there, it makes me very uneasy.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Nobody is disturbing you.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, the Ministry is now rightly manned by a competent Minister. Now the popular urge is that amongst these three important people, the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, one should become the Chairman of the Council. This should be considered.

Secondly, there are three nominated members in the Planning Commission from the North-Eastern States. These three persons should be given due weightage, status, power and authority in such a manner as if they are regular members. This is another popular urge which should be considered by the Ministry.

Thirdly and probably lastly, the geographical area and terrain of these North-Eastern States have a tremendous potentiality; it has borders with several international countries. In the words of the Prime Minister, it is the gateway of South-East Asia. It is a envious location in which the North-Eastern States are located. It is upto us how best the North-Eastern States can be used as a base to step up excellent markets for those countries which can take our products. It is a long-term process. This should also be considered. Thank you, Sir. Have I not kept up my word?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have not been charitable to others.

SHRI NABAM REBIA (Arunachal Pradesh): Thank you, Sir, for allowing me to participate in this very important discussion. I come from the last and extreme East, NorthEast State, Arunachal Pradesh, the land of the rising sun. Let me repeat what some of my colleagues have already said about how this NEC came into being. It came into being in 1972 through an enactment in 1971. It was amended in 2002 to become a Regional Planning body of the North-Eastern Region, including the State of Sikkim. Now, we have eight States. This North-Eastern Council was born out of the dream of late leader Shrimati Indira Gandhi. She wanted this Council to act as a catalyst for the all-round development of the North-Eastern Region. And it is for the North-Eastern Council and also for the people of the North-Eastern Region to see that the dreams of late leader Shrimati Indira Gandhi are realised.

Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Chairperson of the UPA, Madam Sonia Gandhi for revamping the North-

Eastern Council and also the initiative they are taking for the development of this region. I would also like to thank them for making our senior most leader of the region, Mr. P.R. Kyndiah, who is no other than the Minister in-charge of DoNER, Development of North-Eastern Region, as the Chairman of this Council.

Sir, through this Council, the Government of India provides plan assistance to the State Government and institutions. Till the end of the Ninth Five Year Plan, the Council has received Plan assistance to the tune of Rs. 5,284.73 crores. As our Matilaldada has said, our Plan allocation for 2005-06 has been fixed at Rs. 500 crores, as against the proposed Plan outlay of Rs. 1,136 crores. This meagre allocation would not help to redress the regional imbalance. I would like to request the Planning Commission to reconsider this.

Now, I would like to say something about some of the major schemes, which the North-Eastern Council is taking up in the region. First, I will go to the roads. Some people think that the North-Eastern Region consists of just one State. Earlier, there used to be some Members, I came across many of them, who thought that North-East means only one State or two States. As I said, in the beginning of my speech, there are eight States in the North-East. The condition of roads in these States is very, very poor. For example, the State of Arunachal Pradesh, which is geographically the biggest amongst all the States of the North-Eastern Region, touches three international borders, namely, Myanmar, China and Bhutan. There are villages, Sir, where the people have to walk for days together to reach the district headquarters. We don't have the infrastructure. Sir, I feel disturbed when the Chair is disturbed. If the Chair could lend his ears to me, I would be extremely grateful. The Golden Quadrilateral under the East-West Corridor formulated during the time of the NDA Government has done great discrimination to us. The slogan was Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Gujarat to—many say, Nagaland, some say, Assam, but the right word is—Arunachal Pradesh. Gujarat to Arunachal Pradesh ! The Golden Quadrilateral, which starts from Gujarat should have gone to Arunachal Pradesh. Instead of touching Arunachal Pradesh, it has turned towards the west, Assam. We have been abandoned. We have been made orphan. These were the policies of the previous Government. Can we not have a good road? Is Arunachal Pradesh not entitled to have a good road? We are not having even a good National Highway, worth calling a National Highway.

When you see the other side, across the border, the villages in China, from many pockets of Arunachal Pradesh, you can see some parts of China. These villages are developing like anything. They have everything. They have electricity, all weather condition roads. They have everything. But my State is still deprived of this. And you talk of population because Arunachal Pradesh does not have population. When you talk, "We should control our population", but when it comes to Arunachal Pradesh, another argument applies, "No, you do not have the population." Should we have more population? Then we would welcome it because we still have the polygamy system. We can marry more than one. If it is the criteria to get good road, development of infrastructure facilities we can still practise polygamy. We, the educated people do not do this. My father was having twelve wives. We are more than thirty children. But you see, he did not have the formal education. Now that I am educated, my quota is restricted to only one. This is the change. And this is the answer to population. Only in the name of population, we are being discriminated in many fields. This is the point that should be taken into account by the Government because after fifty-eight years of Independence, we are not having proper infrastructure, proper roads. The Government can, definitely, not say that there is a misuse of the funds given to the State.

I would now come to power. The other day, I believe, there was a discussion on power, a debate on the floor of the House. The North-Eastern region has the highest power potential. Massive hydro-power potential, particularly in the State of Arunachal Pradesh. Now, of course, some mega hydro projects have started. One project has been already commissioned. If the power potential of Arunachal Pradesh can be tapped, if it can be exploited, if it can be harnessed, would only the people of Arunachal Pradesh be benefited by this? Is the country not going to get the benefit? Why should there be a delay in giving clearance by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, in giving a green signal to the project? Why this delay? I would also request some of the so-called environmentalists to consider this. If it is unparliamentary, you may like to delete it. The NGOs, in the name of working for the environment, are going there are telling the people, "Do not allow the dams to be constructed, do not allow the project to be taken up." Only in the interest of the country, we need to allow, we need to take this up, we need to harness the rich hydro-power potential of the State of Arunachal Pradesh.

As I have said on the floor of the House on one or two occasions,

probably, today our position is that beggars cannot be choosers. But let me tell you, Sir, after 10 or 15 or 20 years, we are going to be one of the richest States in the country provided our hydro-power potential is properly harnessed and exploited. The entire North-Eastern Region has tremendous tourism potential also but because of the disturbances and in the name of law and order problem, it is not picking up. But people should try to understand, if there is a bomb blast in Mizoram it is not necessarily a bomb blast in Arunachal Pradesh, it is not necessarily a bomb blast in other parts of the North-East. If there is some happening in some parts of the North-East, they always say the whole North-East is burning. It is called disturbed. If there is a *bandh* in Assam, they say, North-East *bandh*. No, Assam *bandh* can never be a North-East *bandh*. If some parts of Assam goes for a *bandh*, they say there is a *bandh* in NER. If there is a blast or some extortion or some killing, they say it is in North-East. It is always misrepresented. Clear picture of the North-East is not understood and appreciated by the other people. To promote tourism, in my State of Arunachal Pradesh, we have scope for Green tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism. Every type of tourism could be there and for that the Government needs to relax the PAP, the RAP. These are regulated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The powers to issue PAP and RAP should be developed to the State Government, if tourism is to be promoted. It is the only sector where lot of unemployed educated local youth will get employment and the area will be exposed. I would like to request the Chairman of NEC to take this point into account. I have not touched all the issues which are prioritised in your NEC plan. But in the medical and health sector, I would say we have one regional medical college in Imphal which is for the entire region, particularly for some of the States and many of the States of North-Eastern Region have their medical college.

My State, Arunachal Pradesh does not have a medical college as yet. I would like to say that if NEC could initiate for having at least, one medical college in each of the States of the North-Eastern Region, it would be very good and so that our students do not have to go out of the State. An incident that has happened yesterday, our students coming from North-East, in pursuit of higher studies, are getting exploited, getting bad name. This is a compulsion. I would like to request the council to see that each State, particularly, Arunachal Pradesh should also get a medical college. There is a rise of cancer patients in the North-Eastern Region. This is a very, very important point which the Council has to take note of. There is

tremendous rise of cancer cases in the North-East. There is Dr. Baruah Cancer Institute at Guwahati which is totally ill-equipped, totally outdated. I do not know what is happening. In every Consultative Committee meeting by DoNER, I have been raising this. Please see to it that this hospital is very well equipped and trained doctors are posted there so that we can tackle the cancer cases in the North-Eastern Region. Regarding air connectivity most of the state capitals have been connected with air connectivity except the state of Arunachal Pradesh. I say, of course, we have not been able to give the Airports Authority of India the area which they wanted, but if each capital could have an airport then that would be better; and, Sir, I would also like to request to see that private operators like the Jet Airways or the Air Sahara could be invited to operate small aircraft in the region.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI NABAM REBIA: You have a proposal for launching an ISBT. If you are doing so, I would say that each State capital of the North-Eastern Region should be connected.

On top of all, S.P. Shukla Commission's Report contains many important recommendations. The Commission has given its recommendations to develop the region, to take forward the region, etc. If the NEC could have a proper look at this Report, it would be of immense help to us. I do not want to take much of your time.

With these words, I am extremely thankful to you for allowing me to participate in this important discussion. Thank you very much.

SHRI RISHANG KEISHING (Manipur): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, for giving me an opportunity to participate in this important discussion. The recent reconstitution of the NEC is a welcome step. All along, we have been saying that the Governors and authorities should not be appointed as the Chairman of the NEC. We have been stressing that the Chairman should be either the Home Minister or the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. Now, the present Government has created a separate Ministry—DoNER—for the North-East. On top of it, the Minister who is in-charge of this Ministry has been made as the Chairman of the NEC. So, it is a welcome step. We hope, under his leadership, we will make a speedy progress. You are aware of the fact that the North-Eastern Region comprising eight States, including Sikkim. Earlier, we had only seven States and we

used to call this region as Seven-sister States. Now, we have Sikkim. So, I do not know how we call it. We are all tiny States, except Assam. They are heavily deficit States. We are surviving on the grants of the Central Government. On the top of it, we are so backward and came into the mainstream almost after Independence of this country. Earlier, we were, more or less, separated from the country and some of the areas were kept under unadministered area. We remain backward till today. Heavy insurgency is affecting these areas. This is the misfortune of this region. Now, whatever fund we have, each State utilise it for its own programmes and schemes. But, then, greater issues and common problems like inter-State roads, expensive projects like power, communication, bridges on the Brahmaputra, are all cannot be taken up, out of the State funds. So many important common issues and problems are there. To take care of these, we need one body like the NEC which can look after all these States. I think, our former leaders thought all this and the NEC was constituted and they wanted that it should be made to work in its proper form and proper way. The NEC should not be diverted to other issues. The NEC should be firm and work for the common development of this region. It is highly important for the region and also for the nation that these areas, which are tiny areas, should develop. Sometimes, they think that they are not part of India. quite a good number of tiny States think that they are not part of India. So, every State-large or small-should think that they are part of India. What is happening in this region is this. The leaders in the country should know it and appreciate it and we have to work more. This can be countered only by speedy development and more development. Apart from the National Highway, we need a network of inter-State routes and for this the State Governments will not be able to spend from their own funds. It is here that the NEC should step in a big way to work on road network, connecting all the States. Then, I come to power projects. The North-East has plenty of hydropower. It is not to be consumed by us alone, but the country as a whole. The whole country will consume this. The North-East is a precious part of our country. The hydropower is available in abundance. Why don't we explore it? Why don't we use that? Today, Maharashtra has the power shortage of around 4000 MW. I think, if this abundance of hydropower in the North-East is explored, it can be supplied to the many of the States, which face power shortage. It is a national wealth. Don't think that it is a wealth that belongs to the North-East only. It will be wrong to think so. The States, which will take electricity from the North-East, will

not take it free of cost. And, that will contribute to our financial resources. At the same time, whole country will benefit from this. So, such a possibility is there. The NEC must evolve useful and purposeful projects. And, I am sure funds will be made available for it by the nation because they will not be for us alone. Also, we would not take it to some other country. It would be for this country only. I hope, the nation will appreciate that.

The North-Eastern States are comparatively smaller States. The medical colleges, engineering colleges and institutions of that sort require huge amount of funds. So, for three-four States together, we have a common centre. For example, in Manipur, we have the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), that has produced more than 2000 MBBS and about 500 MD doctors. And, all the States have shared it. We also have a veterinary institution at, I think, Tripura. We send our students there also. Similarly, if we have something at Mizoram, we share that also. We are sharing our facilities with each other. This kind of institution cannot be run by a State, it can be run by the NEC. All I wish to say is that the NEC-Mr. Kyndiah is incharge of that-should make a proper planning. It should not be biased towards any State. What is of common interest to the whole region should be given the topmost priority. And that topmost priority will be the topmost priority for the nation also. You have to work in this way.

Lastly, I come to the implementation part. Anything that has to be implemented in the North-East often suffers because of insurgency. The insurgents in North-East are only after money. They want business. They want contracts. They want supplies. So, the law and order has also to be made effective. If a State Government is incompetent, the Central Government should step in and provide all-out support. The insurgency should be controlled and the schemes should be properly implemented in the region. And, the whole region should be taken towards progress as a quickly as possible and make us feel that we are the most loving part of the nation. Discrimination, abuse, and the things of that kind, which are happening today, are happening because some people want to exploit the feelings of the people by saying, "See, how we are being treated?" Yesterday, there was a report about gang rape. Some people will try to arouse the feelings of the people on that count too. They will again spread anti-national propaganda.

The NEC, the Government of India, should think of having good hostels for the North-East students because the North-East would like to encourage

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its boys and girls to go to Delhi, the Capital of our Nation. We want that our youngsters, who are afflicted by the insurgency, anti-national forces, should come here and learn what our nation is. They should know what our nation is. That is why we want to encourage them. We should have as many hostels as possible for accommodating boys and girls.

With these few words, I request the Minister In-Charge, to look after the things, and give us a good account of his Ministership and Chairmanship of NEC. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Silvius Condpán. You have three minutes. You complete within three minutes because we have other speakers also.

SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN (Assam): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I agree with you on giving me little time because the speakers have already covered good many areas where the North Eastern Council has failed to come up. I don't want to repeat them. I will only request the Minister, In charge of DONER as well as the Chairman, North Eastern Council, to kindly take them very seriously, and with firm resolution that they will be taken care of.

With all respect to Late Shrimati Indira Gandhi who had a sincere desire for the development of the North East region, which is known as the Scotland of East because of its natural beauty, she wanted that the people of this area should share with the national developmental programme, which in her consideration was required, and this NEC was conceived by her. It was formulated. Today we are discussing the functioning of the NEC. Many friends of mine have already expressed their concern whether NEC has become effective during these 33 years of its existence or not. The hon. Minister, in charge, who is also, fortunately, the Chairman of the NEC, might have heard them very minutely.

Sir, during these 33 years, I want to say how NEC has been so ineffective. In the entire North East, today, only one main railway line is there. It should have been, by this time, at least, double track railway line in which NEC should have played its role to appraise the Central Government and the Ministry of Railways. This did not happen. Till today people are struggling to get it.

Another failure regarding NEC is this. We are having the bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge sanctioned by the Government of India. How is that

functioning? How is it progressing? This year a very meagre amount has been allotted. If this will be the trend of allotting money, the Bogibeel Project will not be completed within 30 years of time. Definitely, I feel there is a lapse by the Planning Department or the Railway Department or any other Department who are supposed to give priority to the construction of this mega project, that is, the construction of Bogibeel rail cum road bridge project over the river Brahmaputra, which is important not only from communication point of view, but also from the defence strategic point of view. But my friends from Arunachal Pradesh have already said the entire area is important from defence strategic point of view. Many of you might remember that in 1962, in the month of October, Chinese came up to Bomdila. If they wanted to walk down to Tezpur, They could have easily done because of apathy shown by the Central Government towards that area. So, Shrimati Indira Gandhi might have thought that some organisation, on behalf of the Centre, should be there, which will go on apprising us what has to be done and which areas are to be taken care of. Sir, I want to conclude now. Till today, we are fighting for the whole of North East. We want one Air service in the evening to go to Guwahati, and one morning air service to come from Guwahati to Delhi, but we don't have. I don't know whether NEC has even realised it. They should also know what are the prime needs of the people of that area. That is why the NEC has been constituted. Today, we are discussing this. Now, the new Chairman has come. We don't want to criticise the former Chairman, but, now, our popular Chairman has come, a democrat has come to preside over the North-Eastern Council, to fulfil the long-cherished desire of late Shrimati Indira Gandhi to see that the North-East comes on a par with the rest of the India. Sir, I will urge upon the new Chairman, who is also the Minister-incharge, DoNER, that under his leadership, practically, there should be no difficulty if the North-Eastern Council and the DoNER are committed to the development of the North-Eastern Region. If they say that area is infested with extremists, who will go there, whether I will come back or not, so, the Central Government and Department officers are having many funny ideas about the area. They don't know their own country for which they feel whether they are secure or not. So, for this or that reason, they do not take care of their responsibility, for the Development of the North-Eastern Region.

Sir, since you have already rang the bell for the second time, I do not want to take much time. **Much has been said. Our very senior leader, the**

former Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri Rishang Keishing has also highlighted many good things. I don't want to repeat them, but I want to subscribe to the view of Mr. Rebia, who is from Arunachal Pradesh. There are also our problems, our grievances from North-East and we want North-Eastern Council to function in an effective manner. Once, I came across a Secretary, North-Eastern Council. He said, हमें यहां पर काम करने में दिल ही नहीं लगता है, गवर्नमेंट ऑफ़ इंडिया ने हमारी पोस्टिंग यहां किसलिए की है। I informed the Chairman, "Don't bring those officers in Shillong who are not interested to work in North-East." If this is the attitude of the bureaucracy, poor Chairman may not be able to function. But they have to come. They have to work for the North-East. That is also a part of the country. They have to build up the North-East. The areas are sensitive from the defence point of view, and also from the extremists point of view. This has already been mentioned by our senior leader, Shri Rishang Keishing, with his experience. These are the areas to be looked into seriously.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Now my last suggestions is, the MPs from North-East, whether the Minister and Chairman, NEC will like it or not, should be called at least twice a year to take stock of the things being done, not done, proposed to be done by NEC so that with the feedback he gets from us, he can impress upon his bureaucrats to formulate plans and programmes for the various development works of our North-Eastern Region. Employment potentiality is there, but people are.... (*Interruptions*)....

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Okay, Sir. The youths are becoming extremists. This can be tapped, if the North-East Council really examines this problem, advises the Home Ministry, then, the Government of India will, definitely, find out employment avenues for them in different ways. The people think that our concerns are not reaching the ears of the Government. We are not being taken care of as seriously as we should have been. As some stray incidents also have been mentioned by my friends, I do not want to repeat them. These are the things that appears to be smaller, but serious. But the people who try to exploit the situation against the Government of India, they do it. Sir, finally, I want to say that the role of the NEC, the functions of the NEC is very big, that is, to build the North-East India at par with the rest of the country. Thank you.

SHRI FALI S. NARIMAN (Nominated): Thank you, Sir. I did not intend to

speaking on this subject of discussion, but I requested you, and you were good enough to give me a couple of minutes to speak.

After hearing the evocative speech of my good and learned friend, Mr. Sarkar, I am inspired to say a few words. My wife and I particularly have a soft corner and affection for the North East. I was born in Burma, and we have visited the North East on several occasions. Never call it the backward part of India. It is a neglected part of India, not a backward part of India, and the most beautiful.

There are two points that I wish to make. One is, which has already been made but which I want to stress upon, and which is most important, that there should be a two-way traffic. That is to say, not only should we pour money, we should also, at the same time, give employment to the youth of the North-East in the Central services in a large way. That should be the main endeavour of this Council. It is a very, very important aspect in order to prevent the youth of the North East from drifting in various other ways. Only then would the North East really get integrated with the Union.

Sir, the other point that I wish to make to the Minister is to impress upon the Prime Minister to request the Chief Justice—I have said this before when the previous Government was in power that we have a bench of the Supreme Court in the North East. We must have a bench of the Supreme Court in the North East, not because there is so much work in the North East, or because they are flooded with cases, but in order to give the impression that we regard the North East as very important. We have a very distinguished judge of great integrity from the North East region in the Supreme Court and we are very proud of him. Therefore, the other side is also important. People must see all our judges also from time to time. They can go there once in two months. It doesn't require a judge to go there for more than a couple of days to dispose of a few appeals, etc. But the fact that the Supreme Court, the highest court in the country, does go to the North East, travels to the North East, is itself very important. I am sure, if the Prime Minister requests the Chief Justice, this will happen. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Lastly, Dr. M.S. Gill; please, take just two or three minutes.

DR. M.S. GILL (PUNJAB): Thank you, Sir, for squeezing me in. But I think some of us, from places other than the North East, do need to

strongly endorse, as I do, the concerns expressed by each one of them. I have listened very carefully to them, and support the requests each one has made, and what my friend, Shri Nariman has said.

Sir, with an "Assamese" Prime Minister, and an economist of great distinction, this is the opportunity to do what should have been done long ago, in the North East. Sir, I totally endorse a Minister, being the Chairman, and not a Governor, of the NEC.

I shall go on further to say that I have seen things myself; I have, after all, got an administrative past. The Secretary should not be an officer from Delhi. They don't want to go there. As my friend from Assam was saying, when they go there, they are working to get back here as fast as then can. उनका दिल उधर नहीं होता है, तो दिल के बगैर काम नहीं होता है, उपसभापति जी। We should look for a worthwhile economic expert, administrator, planner from that region, from some of their worthwhile universities ...*(interruptions)*...

Sir, the North East, with a Minister-Chairman, should be decentralised, with full financial powers, and decision-making powers. Their decisions need not come to Delhi, and Delhi should trust the decisions taken by all of them with the Minister. With such a Secretary, with other intellectual, economic and planning inputs locally, they will do well.

Sir, I just want to flag off. Talk has been heard here that Guwahati should be made an effective international airport immediately. They have the forests; they have the cool hills. Singapore, Bangkok and Hong Kong have the money in steamy South East Asia. They want to come there. Fly them directly to Guwahati and into each of those States. I know forest tourism; I know mountaineering; I know their areas. Open them. I also want to mention to the Home Ministry, for the last fifty years, under the guise of terrorism or threat, they are so frightened! Whom are they going to protect? They are too much frightened. They should not have total control over them-permits and things like that. I know those details. If they do, nothing will get done there. Open the doors of even Siliguri. I had gone to Darjeeling, Sikkim, which is the next door. They were crying because people cannot fly from Singapore. So, no tourism is there. You just open up, then you don't need to do anything for them. Now, I come to other links. I am glad that road link all the way down to Ho Chi Minh City is coming up. Even the train will come. Well open the Second World War's General Stilwell Road, into South East China. Nobody is going to come

and conquer us. Don't be frightened. We see that positive things are happening between the two Governments. Even from Tawang you can go across. Nathu La should be effectively opened. Unless you give them trade routes, how are they going to earn, in those places? Please, open the doors. Yes, it is right to say, that East-West Highway is from Dwarka up to Lohit, and I have been there. It is the farthest corner of the State of Arunachal Pradesh. Of course, I do sympathise with my friend, Rebia. You give more and more money for destroying population control. Sometimes, you should look at other ways of it also, and some of them who have small population are not necessarily the ones less important, and the mechanism allotting funds should not only be how many more are you. Thank you.

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI P.R. KYNDIAH): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, at the outset, I would like to express my enormous thanks to the Members who have participated in the discussion and, in particular, who have rendered valuable suggestions. Coming at a time when the North Eastern Council is being transformed into a regional planning body according to the demand of the present Act, we have had ten speakers. The interest shown in this House, in particular, is of great inspiration to all of us. It is not just a North-East affair, it is a national affair. The North-East problems today have assumed a new dimension where interest is everywhere. I am happy that the hon. Prime Minister himself inaugurated the first meeting of the reconstituted North-Eastern Council last month. After that, there has been a lot of discussion how to make the North-Eastern Council not merely the funds disbursing body but an effective regional planning body like a mini Planning Commission. This is something else. I must also make a mention here that in the reconstituted Council we have three nominated full-time members. One of them is the member of the Planning Commission in charge of the North-Eastern Region, and two of them are seasoned planners or bureaucrats. We have, therefore, professional inputs for the first time. I am happy to work with them for the last one month. I know that NEC will become a kind of a beacon for the future of the North-Eastern Region. Now, when I assumed charge as the Chairman of the North Eastern Council on the 11th March, the first thing that I did was to indicate 'an important look towards the North East'. Someone mentioned that it is a neglected area. I agree, it is. But today,

we are trying to bring out a holistic view of the entire North Eastern Region, and, as a result of which, we have formed an action plan consisting of three nominated members with the Secretary of the North Eastern Council in order to prepare a blueprint for the development of the region; it is 'Vision 2020'. We are going into that direction, and, today, it is not only significant but, I believe, it is historic that this question is raised at the time when we want to have a feedback on how to go about it. Coming to the Members of Parliament of this House, it is not only encouraging but also it gives a fillip towards the direction and how do we go about it. It is important. I will not go into the details. But I must thank each one of them right from Shri Karnendu Bhattacharjee, Shri Matilal Sarkar, Prof. Ram Deo Bhandary, Shri Dwijendra Nath Sharmah, Dr. K. Malaisamy, Shri Nabam Rebia, Shri Rishang Keishing, Shri Fali S. Nariman and Dr. M.S. Gill.

Look at the participants, it is not the North Eastern Region; it is an affair of the entire nation. Today, the North East needs this national input, and, I am happy to inform you about the fund position, a point raised by one Member. Sir, the outlay for the Tenth Plan for the North Eastern Council is Rs. 3,500 crores. For 2002-03, the outlay was Rs. 450 crores, for 2003-04, it was Rs. 500 crores; for 2004-05, it was Rs. 500 crores. It is Rs. 1,450 crores, and, the remaining amount for the current year and the next two years is Rs. 2050 crores against the Tenth Plan outlay. Sir, a few Members raised the point that this amount must go to the NEC, they we can do something concrete. I must also, at this stage, pay tribute to Shrimati Indiraji, late Prime Minister of India, who conceived and concretised on how to bring about a coordinated development in the North Eastern Region, how to put in the scheme of things, and, what is needed is to go into the security concerns of the entire region.

The Prime Minister, and, even in my own speech the other day, I said that the security and development go together as far as North East is concerned. It is important that we should take into consideration the security concerns. Only this morning, I met officers of the Council and I told that the next meeting of the North Eastern Council should be charted out so as to include, (1) the development; (2) the security, and (3) how to go about making an effective regional planning body. This is something that I would like to say.

May I also mention, someone said about it also, that the State of Assam

is the biggest State in the sense that it has high population, but the largest State in terms of areas is Arunachal Pradesh. It is true. The State of Assam is very thickly populated. It is less in size. It is, in fact, a kind of elder sister and the State of Sikkim is the younger sister. And, Sikkim is the youngest sister. So, this is the procedure today. There are many States like Sikkim, but it is doing well. And the other thing that I would like to mention here, which I firmly believe, is that the entire North Eastern Region is not infested with insurgency. That concept is wrong; very, very wrong. It is confined to a few pockets here and there. I have been saying this again and again and I would repeat it here too. There are many peaceful areas. Our duty is to allow peace in these areas. I am happy today, that one of the biggest, rather the fountainhead of insurgency in the North Eastern Region in NSCN(IM); and today, the Government of India, thanks to the initiative taken by our Prime Minister, we are having a dialogue with them. And, it will be peace in Nagaland. I have been to Nagaland. That is peaceful. Everybody is yearning for peace. Nobody can stop when peace avalanche takes place, when there is a ground smell of peace in the heart of men, you cannot stop. So, there is today a new atmosphere there. There may be bomb blasts here and there sometimes. But, that does not mean that the entire North Eastern Region is a hot area, not at all. I have been to all the parts of the North Eastern Area recently. Nothing, happened there. But, somehow, there is a kind of media attention to violence. If there is a peace effort, that has also to get media attention. So, today I am happy. I am happy for another reason also. Out of the ten speakers, six speakers are from the North Eastern Region and four speakers are from other parts of the country, covering all professions. This is something great, something that, as a person hailing from that area, I have read so much about this country of ours that we accept the diversity of the people. One of my senior leaders, Dwijendra Nath Sharmahji, has mentioned about the gang rape of a North-Eastern girl. Sir, she happens to come from my constituency. It is a heinous crime. This is no longer happening to the North-Eastern girls, all the women and all the girls. I think, there must be an action, which is corrective, by the CBI in order to deal with this problem. I believe—yesterday, it was mentioned in the House also—women and girls must be safe. This is important. Not only the North-Eastern girls, I am talking about all the girls. I am happy that a senior leader like Mr. Rishang Keishing has mentioned it. I am happy that North East found a place in our discussion today.

Now, I would like to share with you some of the thoughts that come out of the suggestions that have been given to us. Now, this is important. The North Eastern Council was established in 1972. It was amended in 2002. Today, it is a restructured body. And, one of the main focuses of the North Eastern today is not only to be a fund disbursal agency, as I said earlier, or to be a planning body, but to be a kind of body which oversees the entire North Eastern Region. We talk of isolation, but we must accept the fact that the North Eastern Region is surrounded by foreign countries. Bangladesh is on one side and China is on the other side in the North; we have Myanmar; we have Sikkim, and the entire region is connected by a small land corridor with the main land of India. We have to accept that reality. When you accept that reality, then, things happen. And, how will it happen? It happens only through a coordinated development. The North Eastern is different from other bodies. It consists of all the Governors of eight States, all the Chief Ministers of eight States and three nominated Members. Now, it is acting today as a cohesive body to plan, to disburse funds, if necessary; we have launched a kitty, we have to do many other things. But, at the same time, we have to take stock of the reality of living in a globalised world. We cannot live in isolation. We have to open trade and commerce. We have to look to the East to translate this into action, as the Prime Minister has said, 'Look East Policy'. I am happy that a number of countries in the South-East Asia are taking interest in the North-Eastern Region. Today North-Eastern Region is not just merely a strategic region; it is an economic land bridge towards the South-East Asia. Today, there is a new awareness, a new realisation that the North-East Council can play a role in it. So, this is a new theme that we are taking about. I know that some of my friends in the North East will talk in terms of money, but I am happy as one thing came out of the discussion today is that we would like to make the North-Eastern Council as a regional body, region centric or region-specific, not merely State-specific. I think, this is important. We have to think big. If we think small, we will be small. We have to share our resources together and we have huge resources. You talk about hydel power, it has the biggest potential everywhere; you talk of forests, we have beautiful forests; you talk of waterways, we have to Brahmaputra. But what are need, and I agree with all of you, is connectivity. It is important. How can we bring connectivity? Some Members have mentioned that there is a need of networking, regionally and also with mainland. We need to have

connectivity not only with roads, waterways, railways, but also with airways. I will share with you some of the thoughts given by the Governors in our last meeting. The region is about 8 per cent of the area of the country and 4 per cent of the population. Today we talk of the road network. We do need them, but it will take time; the gestation period will take its time. If we have to connect Arunachal Pradesh, why can't we have a small airfield; why can't we have a small aircraft? This is a new thinking, which is emerging today so that we can connect every capital of the North-Eastern Region. It is a big surprise that the North-Eastern Region is not having a single three-star hotel today. How tourists will come over there? We have requested for it, but it did not come. I do not want to take much time of the House, because I know there is a lot of business to be transacted. But I would like to talk on this issue, because it is my love. I want to see the North-Eastern Region, in the words of Mr. Nariman, integrates with India, psychologically and physically. Today's discussion is really great. I believe that this discussion will give way for more interactions. I am proud that the NEC discussion took place today, and I would not like to go into all the details. I share the views expressed by all the Members. What the hon. Members said today would be taken as a token point for us in the next meeting of the NEC, which will be again a brainstorming session. I feel that this has greatly benefited me, particularly as the Chairman of the NEC and as the Minister concerned. I thank all of you for having participated in this discussion on the functioning of the North-Eastern Council.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, we will take up the statement by Shri Raghuvansh Prasad Singh.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the first, second and third reports of the department-related parliamentary standing committee on rural development

ग्रामीण विकास मंत्री (डा रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह): महोदय, मैं विभाग-संबंधित ग्रामीण विकास संबंधी संसदीय स्थाई समिति के पहले, दूसरे और तीसरे प्रतिवेदनों में अंतर्विष्ट सिफारिशों के कार्यान्वयन की स्थिति के संबंध में वक्तव्य सभा पटल रखता हूँ।