

**RAJYA SABHA**

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**\*SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE**

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**(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)**

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**Friday, December 16, 2022/ Agrahayana 25, 1944 (Saka)**

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**MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR**

**1. Need to Connect Shahjahanpur at NH-24 with Agra Expressway**

**SHRI MITHLESH KUMAR:** I would like to inform the Government that the road from Shahjahanpur to Saurikh via Jalalabad, Farrukhabad, Chibramau on NH-24 will be connected with the four-lane Agra Expressway, which will reduce the distance between Shahjahanpur and Agra, and make this area commercially viable. With the connectivity of NH-24 to the Agra Expressway for the general public, it will become a major route for commuting to Shahjahanpur. Shahjahanpur and Agra, being commercial cities and tourist centres of Uttar Pradesh, it is very important to have a smooth road between these two cities. Therefore, I request the Government to make a four-lane road from Shahjahanpur to Saurikh via Jalalabad, Farrukhabad, Chibramau on NH-24 up to Agra-Lucknow Expressway in public interest.

*(Shri P. Wilson associated.)*

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**\*This Synopsis is not an authoritative record of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.**

## **2. Frauds by Digital Lending Apps Charging Higher Rate of Interest**

**SHRI MOHAMMED NADIMUL HAQUE:** I would like to draw your attention towards unethical practices of digital lending apps inflicting financial harm on the economically weaker borrowers of our country. There is a huge number of complaints received against banks and NBFCs relating to digital lending apps. These apps charge far higher rates of interest than traditional banks. The RBI has tweaked the guidelines and recently they have given fresh guidelines aiming to smoothen the lending process. The stakeholders are still awaiting clarity on many aspects, especially, the First Loss Default Guarantee System (FLDG). There are many illegal lending apps which are not under the ambit of RBI. Out of 1,100 apps, as many as 600 apps are illegal and most of these apps are Chinese apps. They offer small loans without much paper work and then they bully the customers who are unable to repay the loans on time. I appeal to the hon. Finance Minister to take stringent action against these Apps and direct the RBI to issue proper guidelines, so that such Apps can be controlled.

*(Several hon'ble Members associated.)*

**THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN), responding to the matter, said:** I would like to inform the august House that in the last 6-7 months I have had personal meetings with the representatives of the RBI and with my Secretaries in the Ministry. Action from the RBI's side and our side, including the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, has been initiated in this. There is a coordinated effort to contain such Apps and also to take action against those who are misusing such Apps. RBI, MeitY, MCA and the Ministry of Finance are working to ensure that common man is not cheated by any Apps.

## **3. Need to Remove Silt in Main Stream of Ganga, Yamuna and Ghagra Rivers in Uttar Pradesh**

**SHRI BABURAM NISHAD:** Gradual depletion of groundwater level, pollution of rivers and shrinking glaciers are matters of grave concern today. No desilting work is being carried out in rivers in the country. The biggest example of silt deposit is the Farakka dam built across the river Ganga, due to which the water of the river Ganga is breaching its limits

and affecting the lands of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal and huge swathe of land from Rajmahal to Malda has become the largest land erosion site today. Similarly, many villages and towns situated along Ghaghara river are on the verge of displacement due to land erosion. Due to non-removal of silt, most of the rivers are facing existential threat and groundwater level is going down. As a result, problem of drinking water and irrigation is also worsening.

*(Dr. Fauzia Khan associated.)*

#### **4. Financial Difficulties being Faced by Heavy Engineering Corporation Ltd., Ranchi, Jharkhand**

**SHRI MAHUA MAJI:** I would like to bring it to the knowledge of this House that Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited, Ranchi, which was established in 1958 and is considered a distinguished institution of Jharkhand, is in a miserable condition today. The employees, contractors and labourers of this institution have not received their salaries for the last 12 months and their families are on the brink of starvation.

*(Several hon'ble Members associated.)*

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#### **PRIVATE MEMBER'S RESOLUTION**

##### **Setting up of Agarwood Board of India**

**SHRI BIPLAB KUMAR DEB:** I am moving a resolution to apprise you of the fact that a sustainable cultivation and promotion of Agarwood and its products may lead to significant economic empowerment of the farmers of the country, especially in the North Eastern region of our country. Optimising the potential of Agarwood in the State of Tripura alone has the potential to usher an 'economic revolution' by creating a 20 billion rupees industry and making the capital of the State, Agartala, the capital of Agarwood in the country. Hence, this House urges upon the Government to set up an Agarwood Board of India with its headquarters at Agartala, Tripura. The Government should empower the Board so that it could formulate policies for the Agarwood growers and promote its industrial use. The Government should provide requisite support for making India the

export powerhouse of the world. I would like to share that Agarwood plants are very expensive. They are found extensively in Tripura, Assam and Karnataka. These plants become mature in seven to eight years. After that, after two-three years of injecting it, fungus and chips come in it and the oil that comes out of it, its minimum price in the market is Rupees 20 to 30 lakh per litre. It is considered as golden oil. If it is not extracted artificially, that is, if it is left only after being injected, then the oil that comes out of it is so pure that it is sold at a minimum of Rs 75 lakh per litre. There are about one crore twenty five lakh mature plants in Tripura. The revenue generation is not much in a small state like Tripura. It has not become a big industry. This is such an area, which in the next two years, Assam, especially Tripura and a part of Karnataka, can give an economy of two to two and a half thousand crore rupees to the Government of India. Today, it is being imported from Thailand, Laos. The Chips and perfume are made from this. Its illegal business is going on. I had drawn the attention of the Hon'ble Prime Minister towards this when I was in the Government of Tripura. For the first time, on January 3, 2022, the Central Government had given permission to export 25 thousand metric tonnes of Agarwood. But till date, due to export policy complications, nothing has been exported. We should simplify export rules. I request the Government of India to set up a Special Committee for this. We can follow the rules of Laos and other leading countries, in this regard. The root, leaves, stem of agarwood are all full of medicinal properties. To promote this, the Government of Tripura had come up with '*Agar Mission*', which I also presented before you. You know that the Government of India has constituted a Tea Board, Coffee Board, Rubber Board and Spices Board. If the Government also sets up the Agarwood Board and simplifies the rules related to exports and trade, it can prove to be an unimaginably revolutionary step for the country's economy. Large quantities of Agarwood can also be used as a raw material in incense sticks. Earlier, incense sticks were imported from China. But the Government of India imposed a high duty on imported material to promote the local cottage industry, which helped the cottage industry in North-Eastern region, a great deal. This sector can give us a lot of employment. I hope that the Central Government will prepare a proper policy to promote the Agarwood sector.

**SHRI PABITRA MARGHERITA:** In support of this resolution, I would like to say that Agarwood is a very valuable tree like sandalwood tree.

It can be cultivated in tropical humid climatic conditions. Depending upon the source of origin and quality of oil, it costs from Rs.10 lakh to Rs.40 lakh per litre. The Agarwood chips cost around Rupees one lakh per kilogram. The Agar oil, Agarwood chips, and perfume made out of it are in high demand in Middle East countries and ASEAN region. Keeping its demand and economic potential in mind, the Government must set up an apex body to monitor, govern and empower the Agar cultivators and its cultivation. We should provide subsidy to farmers. We need to encourage Self-Help Groups and cooperative societies. In Assam, the Agarwood cultivation is done by private individuals and there are about 1,000 Agarwood-based industries. It is almost like a capital of agarwood industry. Two particular decisions have been taken by the Assam Cabinet. By amending certain rules, the State Government has encouraged its commercial cultivation. As per available data, a maximum of 75,000 kilo litre Agarwood oil only is permitted to be exported from India. So, that cap on export must be removed. It is expected that present one crore Agarwood tree population will reach five crore in 2026. It could yield a trade to the tune of Rs.7,500 crore to Rs.10,000 crore. I think the Central Government should extend support to it like Tea Board and Coffee Board. It may be noted that Agarwood has been commercially cultivated by people for a few decades in Tripura, Assam, Nagaland and other states. So, I support the resolution and urge the Government to do the needful.

**SHRI AJAY PRATAP SINGH:** The subject of the resolution presented in the House by our colleague Shri Bilab Deb ji is regional, because Agarwood happens to be a product of North Eastern states. His main demand is that Agartala should be the capital of Tripura state and that Agartala should be declared as Agarwood capital from the point of view of production and trade of Agarwood and a board should be set up for Agarwood. This board should be under the Ministry of Commerce. Referring to the specialty of agarwood, he said that this product is so important that through it a trade of about five thousand crore rupees takes place in the country. Incidentally, due to the complexity of the regulation process made for its exchange and production, this product is not able to make the expected contribution to the economy of India. Due to its smuggling, black marketing and theft, people associated with this product do not get profit. If the rules and procedures are simplified, then the people of Tripura will get its benefit

in true sense. Our poor sisters are doing such a good work through self-help groups that today they have made a significant contribution to India's economy as well. Similarly, the sisters of the self-help group are also associated with agarwood product and their economic progress is taking place. For this, they need financial help and they also need help for marketing the product they make. The Government of Madhya Pradesh has formed a Karmakar Mandal under which all the labourers are registered. If such a scheme is not there in the state of Tripura, then provision can be made for the sisters of these self-help groups also. Most of the production of incense sticks does not require any huge factory or much resources. In a way, it is a cottage industry. A large population of Tripura can earn extra income by joining this cottage industry by putting in some extra time. Farmers want to plant trees to produce agarwood, but the rules and procedures are very complicated. When the time comes to use the wood of the tree when it grows up, it is necessary to take various types of permissions from the forest department. Due to this, the farmer gets discouraged. That's why I request that various rules and regulations should be simplified. If this agarwood is produced on the barren land of the farmers, then through that production the income of the farmers will also increase and the size of our industry will also increase. At present, we give Kisan Samman Nidhi to those who grow wheat, paddy, pulses, oilseeds etc. We should also bring people associated with tree products under the ambit of Kisan Samman Nidhi. If we have to take forward the industry of agarwood, then we must definitely put emphasis on its research and establish a research centre. Roads, electricity and water are needed for any business. All these three facilities should be arranged to take this business forward.

**SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P:** The mover of this Resolution could have submitted a memorandum to the Ministry concerned and this should have been easily made available. We have created a wonderful Spice Board once upon a time. But, what is the fate of this Spice Board of India?

**SHRI RAKESH SINHA:** I would like to tell one important aspect of agarwood. If you go to Meghalaya or Nagaland or Tripura, the tribals there see agarwood in a cultural-spiritual realm. Due to this decentralized cultural-spiritual concept, this spirit of the tribals faced the colonial invasion and preserved their culture despite hundreds of years of

colonial rule. Agarwood is a testament to that. There is an economic importance of this tree associated with this cultural-spiritual consciousness. The forests of Meghalaya have the concept of a sacred forest. Whether it is Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills or Khasi Hills, wherever this sacred forest is, it is most protected and cultivated there. There is another specialty of this tree, which we all should know. In general, we want the trees to be free from infection. But unless the agarwood is infected, it is pale yellow in color and of little importance. But when there is an infection in this tree, as the infection increases, the agarwood starts turning black and its weight starts increasing. This is the first such tree in the world, which fully emerges in its economic element after being infected, and then its wood is sold for Rs. 5 lakh per kg. Of all the natural products produced from natural resources all over the world, agarwood is the most expensive product in the world used to make perfumes and incense sticks. With regard to the resolution made by the honourable Member, I am of the opinion that a board should be constituted to give local products an all-India character. This means that their production should be promoted in any region of India according to the climate.. Thus, if today we export two thousand kgs of Agar wood from one state only, after expansion of its production, we can export up to one lakh kgs. This will increase our income significantly. The income earned in this way will benefit the tribal farmers who have been deprived for a long time. Pattals made from leaves of Areca nut produced in Meghalaya are reusable and their use is beneficial to health also. These pattals are sold for 15 to 25 rupees each in Delhi, but a tribal does not get even a rupee for its price. We should try to change the conditions of the tribal community. For this, a National Level Board should be constituted and some important tasks should be assigned to it. The Board should identify the areas in the country, in which these crops can be produced. Once coconut was produced only in Kerala and Kolkata, but now it is being produced in other areas as well. Similarly, efforts should also be made to grow products like Areca nut or Agar wood in other parts of the country as well. After identifying the production areas, the board should decide the manner of linking the production to exports. Today, there is a demand for Agar wood in many countries. But, India is not able to meet that demand, because despite having natural resources, we have not achieved that potential. It is the job of the State and the Government to develop natural resources in a systematic and scientific manner through

public participation and farmers should be empowered by this development. Presently, the production of Agar wood is mainly limited to Assam and Tripura, while its production is also possible in Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. In Tripura itself, more land can be allotted for Agar wood production. Today, the forests in Jaintia, Garo and Khasi Hills have survived only because of cultural-spiritual reasons. Similarly, Agar wood has been preserved by the tribes of Tripura and the people of Assam for cultural-spiritual reasons only. Little did they know that there would be a demand for it abroad and it would sell at high prices. The National Agar wood Board should include people who may not have received any formal education, but have been involved in Agar wood production from generations. The country does not run by shouting slogans. The country has to deal with basic issues. There should be a national policy for the production of agarwood. The people of Mithila consume a lot of betel. Betel leaves are produced in the North-East. If this is streamlined, those tribals will not need any grant from outside. The Government of India should promote the agricultural system of this region by providing grants at the national level. Will India mean only metropolis and upper middle class? In the meaning of India, that tribal is also included, who does not have full clothes on his body, who does not have a house. Today the schemes of the government are reaching there. I will request the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture to visit such places and meet the farmers there. Without knowing their reality, you cannot talk about the development of the country. I urge upon the House not only to give assent to this Resolution, but also attach yourself emotionally to it. Now the country is changing, where the tribals have the same importance as the people living in the cities.

**DR. JOHN BRITTAS:** I express my gratitude towards the Hon. Member for bringing this Resolution because he understands the agony of the agarwood farmers. Even the ruling party Members are concerned about the plight of our farmers. I appreciate it. The Resolution is very elaborate. He thought it appropriate and befitting to draft his demand as a Resolution so that he gets the support of the Opposition for it. I have gone through different paragraphs of this Resolution. I appreciate one of the very important aspects which he has mentioned because he has written, "Provide adequate welfare measures for Agarwood cultivators". Agarwood is used for religious, medicinal and other purposes. This is very important for all facets of

our lives. Paragraph (g) of the Resolution is very important. MSME sector is very important. This Resolution has got a direction and a purpose. We support the Resolution because farmers can survive only if their products are turned into value added products and that can be instrumental in giving jobs to people. In our country the maximum number of people work in MSME sector. If MSME sector is developed, that would help to give jobs to people including the tribals. That is why, we are wholeheartedly supporting this Resolution. The biggest issue of the MSME sector is that they do not have skill and there is a deficit for the credit. The two death blows for the MSME sector were demonetization and Covid. Thousands of MSMEs were closed due to which lakhs of people lost their jobs. So, the Resolution which harps on the imperative of the MSMEs, is very important. Coming to the agriculture, can we think about India if we ignore the agriculture sector. Unless the states are empowered, and their finances are strengthened, how can they help the Agarwood farmers? I am talking about the hardships being faced by the farmers, especially, in Tripura, not only agarwood farmers, the rubber farmers. This Resolution is very progressive and it would have an impact on the lives of so many millions of people. The cardinal points on which this House has to debate: Can we leave the plight of farmers like this? The second thing is that we have to protect our farmers. For that we have to give them remunerative price. That is the biggest crisis there. The basic parameter on which we need to deliberate this issue is the policy of this Government towards the farmers and agriculture. I fully support this Resolution.

**DR. AMEE YAJNIK:** The House urges the Government to come up with Agarwood Board of India. That Board should be empowered. Some important points come out of this particular Resolution. You should empower the farmers. The Resolution Mover has sought some kind of promotion of these products with the MSMEs. I wish, when the Government thinks of forming this Agarwood Board, the Government will give sufficient investment and funds for research and development. We are talking of innovation every day. Who are the people who would promote these innovations? I think, there should be some awareness programmes which the Board should conduct. When the Board is formed, it should be manned by technical experts and rules should be definitely framed for this Board. I completely support the Resolution.

**SHRI KAMAKHYA PRASAD TASA:** It is not just a case of Tripura, it is a case of entire North-East, where this Agarwood was in endangered condition, now it has recovered. Agarwood has a huge world, which extends upto Dubai. I want its regulatory board to be formed because the whole rural economy rests on it. I request to those who are listening that they should also plant Agarwood, because it is in endangered position and its numbers are not as it should be. But its market is very wide and its market should be integrated. There should also be research regarding its uses. If there is research on this, we will know its uses. If you go to Dubai or Arab, you will know how concerned people are for this oil. Who are such fundamentalists, they should be looked into seriously and I would urge the government to see where oil money comes from. (*Speech unfinished.*)

*Discussion not concluded.*

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### SPECIAL MENTIONS

#### 1. Need to Declare Assamese Language as Classical Language of India

**SHRI PABITRA MARGHERITA: \***

#### 2. Need to Establish Central Tribal University in Rairangpur in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha

**SHRIMATI MAMATA MOHANTA: ♣**

#### 3. Need to Strengthen Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy

**SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN:** The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy was adopted in 2014 to ensure public consultation for all legislations. There is an immediate need to take steps to strengthen the 2014 Policy. The Ministry of Law and Justice must create a public dashboard reflecting the Bills that have been sent for public consultation. If, for some reason, the Bill

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\* Synopsis of speech delivered by Hon'ble Member in Assamese will be published separately as supplement.

♣ Synopsis of speech delivered by Hon'ble Member in Odia will be published separately as supplement.

has not been circulated for comment, the Minister should lay a reason for it. To make public consultation binding on all Ministries, the Manual for Parliamentary Procedures should be modified.

*(Several hon'ble Members associated.)*

#### **4. Need for Sympathetic Consideration to Allow an Extra Attempt to UPSC Aspirants in Relaxation of Rules**

**DR. L. HANUMANTHAI AH:** This issue is related to the UPSC Aspirants. The students were denied the examination of UPSC during the Covid pandemic. They have requested the Government to give relaxation. But the Government has told them that it is not possible. Earlier the Government has given relaxation in the age-limit for various examinations in the same situation. It has been done many times. So I demand the Government to consider this issue in the interest of the youth of the country.

*(Several hon'ble Members associated.)*

#### **5. Air Pollution in Ramgarh District of Jharkhand**

**SHRI KHIRU MAHTO:** Kotre, Basantpur, Pachmo - KBP project has been built under Hazaribagh area in Ramgarh district of Jharkhand state. This land was given by Coal India Limited to C.C.L. 43 years have passed, but C.C.L. has not started functioning till date. After that, a demand has also been made for one thousand acres of reserved forest land. Such a large amount of forest land should not be given for any other purpose. Many factories are set up in Jharkhand especially in Dhanbad and Ramgarh districts. This has resulted in air pollution and acquisition of forest land due to coal mines. Therefore, unnecessary acquisition of forest land should be banned.

*(Several hon'ble Members associated.)*

#### **6. Need to Start Oral History Project in Universities of India**

**SHRI RAKESH SINHA:** India is an ancient civilization and the versatility and diversity in its culture is indescribable. Many locally based traditions and values of life are present in the country in the form of micro-cultures for thousands of years. The history of an ancient civilization, its heritage, traditions of knowledge, subtle cultures could not be covered in

writing. It is our responsibility to collect it in a scientific way, to create a knowledge base of information. Hence, there is a need to start an oral history project. This project should be started in the universities of India.

*(Dr. Amar Patnaik associated.)*

#### **7. Need to Set up Agro-Industries related to Paddy in Chandauli District of Uttar Pradesh**

**SHRIMATI DARSHANA SINGH:** Paddy is cultivated in abundance in Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh. Therefore, there are immense possibilities of agro-based industry there. This is also in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. Chandauli has good potential for industrial units for rice bran oil. Not only this, ethanol can also be produced from paddy waste, which will help in the production of biofuel. Therefore, Government should consider setting up an industrial unit related to paddy in Chandauli district.

*(Dr. Fauzia Khan and Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla associated.)*

**P. C. MODY,**  
*Secretary-General.*

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