

RAJYA SABHA

*SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Tuesday, December 03, 2024/ Agrahayana 12, 1946 (Saka)

OBSERVATIONS BY THE CHAIR

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have received 42 Notices, the highest so far, in the last quarter of the century of adoption of the Indian Constitution, and the Notices are under Rule 267. One of the notices, remarkably, is in public domain! Whereas, by Bulletin and otherwise, we have mandated that there can be no advance publicity. I had to seek counsel from Shri Jairam Ramesh, I called him to my Chamber. He is not the one who sent it, Shri Raghav Chadha has sent it. It is in public domain and in 100 per cent disregard of the provisions. It seems the gentleman has not read Rule 267 even once. And putting it in public domain is too serious a matter. I would want this House to maintain highest ethical standards and protect our privileges. It is under my contemplation. I had discussed with leaders what steps are to be taken because this is getting beyond control at the moment. Hon. Members, since the number is 42, with your leave, I would not be making reference to the names because the number can grow to any level, at least, the level we have here. But please take one thing into consideration. Under Rule 267, a Member wants that the House's normal functioning be suspended to discuss a matter and the same Member has given more than one notices under Rule 267. That would be humanly impossible for anyone to accommodate the request of the Member. I would, therefore, urge the hon. Members to deeply reflect and allow me to proceed with the Business of the House.

MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

1. Demand for Immediate Financial Relief Assistance for the People Affected by Cyclone Fengal in Tamil Nadu

SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA: I wish to raise a matter of urgent public importance regarding the devastating impact of Cyclone Fengal on the districts of Chennai, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Chengalpattu, Tiruvannamalai, Tirupathur, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri. The cyclone has caused widespread destruction, severely affected infrastructure, agriculture and led to the tragic loss of many lives. These districts, which have faced the brunt of the cyclone, have seen extensive damage to homes, roads, railway lines, bridges, power lines, and agricultural land, leaving countless families in a state of distress. In the light of immense destruction caused by the cyclone, I urge the Government of India to provide immediate financial assistance of Rs. 2,000 crore for provision of essential aid to the affected communities, restore infrastructure and rebuilding agricultural sectors. I request that a Central Team be sent to the affected areas to assess the damage in these districts and prepare a

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

detailed report on the extent of destruction. I request the Government of India announce ex-gratia payments to the families of those who have tragically lost their lives due to the cyclone's impact, as a mark of compassion and solidarity.

(Shri Vaiko and Dr. M. Thambidurai also associated.)

2. Demand to Build an International Airport in Puri, Odisha

SHRI SUBHASISH KHUNTIA: I seek to draw the Government's attention to the urgent need for an early operation of the proposed international airport in Puri. Under the visionary leadership of the former Chief Minister, Shri Naveen Patnaik, the Odisha Government submitted a detailed project report for the Puri international airport featuring world class facilities to the Ministry of Civil Aviation in July, 2023. The airport's location was strategically selected due to Puri's historical and spiritual significance, particularly, as the home of the sacred Jagannath Temple and its numerous tourist attractions. While the Odisha Government has completed formalities including land acquisition and construction of boundary wall, no further progress has been made to advance the project towards operationalization. On operationalization, the Jagannath Puri international airport will not only address the growing travel demands of pilgrims and tourists, but will also provide direct air connectivity to Puri, facilitating the exploration of its renowned attraction such as Jagannath Temple, Puri beach and nearby historic sites, like the Sun Temple at Konark. I urge the hon. Minister of Civil Aviation to take necessary steps to expedite the completion and operationalization of the Puri International Airport for the greater benefit of tourists, pilgrims and the region's overall development.

3. Recent Violence and Law and Order Situation in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh

PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV: On 19 November, a lawyer gave an application to the Munsif Magistrate to survey a 500-year-old mosque in Sambhal. The survey was done peacefully within two hours. On the 24th, at 6 am, the entire Sambhal was turned into a police cantonment. People there did not know why the police was being deployed there. After a while, the DM, SSP, the lawyer who had given the application and some people went with the police playing drums and entered the mosque. The crowd suspected that they were going to vandalize the mosque or do something else. The SDM opened the water tank there. When the water came out, people suspected that something wrong was going on in it. After that there was unrest there, the police fired, five people were killed and twenty people were injured. Hundreds of people were prosecuted, many are in jails and those who were caught were brutally beaten.

4. Demand for Declaring Recent Landslide in Wayanad District as Calamity of Severe Nature under Level – 3 Disasters

SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P: Landslide happened in some parts of Mundakkai Village in Wayanad, Kerala, is unparalleled in the history of natural calamities in Kerala. It took more than 420 lives, 109 lives are still missing and more than 1,000 buildings, including mosques, statues, school buildings, houses are completely damaged. So, there is a request from our side to consider this as a Calamity of Severe Nature Level – 3 Disaster. We have submitted a plan to rehabilitate affected people and places. Instead of declaring this as a Calamity of Severe Nature, we feel that the treatment of the Centre is a kind of cruelty of severe nature. It is not supporting the State of Kerala. So, this kind of approach must be revisited. We demand inclusion of this calamity as Level – 3 calamity. Central rules related to

natural calamities are illogical and impractical as far as our State is concerned. So, there is a need to revisit these laws also. Of course, we all have political differences and it should not be a barrier in helping people of the State of Kerala.

(Shrimati Jebi Mather Hisham, Dr. John Brittas and Shri Haris Beeran also associated.)

5. Need for Promulgation of Government Schemes Meant for Women Empowerment

SHRIMATI SANGEETA YADAV: Our Hon'ble Prime Minister is running several schemes like Namu Drone Didi, Lakhpati Didi and health related schemes for women empowerment. The government has taken several important steps for women empowerment, especially financial assistance is being provided to women through self-help groups, but the benefits of these schemes will be maximum only when we can spread their information widely in rural areas as well. Although the government has taken several important steps in this direction, now the time has come to take some more new and effective measures to make these schemes popular at the grassroots level. For example, we should try to reach these schemes to the people through digital platforms, mobile apps, social media as well. Also, an awareness campaign should be run by women's groups in rural areas and these women should be told through training how they can avail the benefits of these schemes sitting at home. I would also appeal that the publicity about these schemes should be increased in local languages. Also, the schemes should be promoted in every village through community radio, loudspeakers, street plays and pamphlets. Local public representatives and panchayats should also be involved to promote these schemes and ensure that more and more women join these schemes and avail the benefits.

6. Concern over Misuse of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) Scheme in Ahmedabad

SHRI SHAKTISINH GOHIL: The people of Khyati Hospital in Ahmedabad used to organize free medical camps in villages. When poor people went there, they would tell them that there is a blockage in their heart, come to Khyati Hospital tomorrow, you will have to undergo angiography. Then angiography was done on those who did not need it and stents were put in. That hospital swindled crores of rupees through the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. When two of the people who had undergone angiography and angioplasty in Khyati Hospital died and many had to be admitted to the ICU, then the Government woke up and investigated and found that by doing this repeatedly, they had taken crores of rupees from the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. It was the responsibility of the Government that if action was taken against this hospital at that time, then the second accident would not have happened. Today many people have lost their lives. Now the main accused has fled abroad. I request the Government to get the CBI investigation done here under the supervision of an independent judiciary, because this is a very serious matter.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

7. Concern over use of Online Gambling and Betting in Providing Financial Support to Terrorism

DR. AJEET MADHAVRAO GOPCHADE: A report by the Centre for Security and Scientific Technical Research, National Defence University, mentioned that illegal online betting and gambling companies are acting as a vehicle for money laundering and terrorism funding. Illegal online gambling and betting apps are forcing Indian digital users to face many threats like cyber security attacks and unsafe online environment. This has become a serious threat to India's national security. Surrogate advertising for illegal betting and

gambling websites online in India has become a major trend. Due to legal restrictions on advertising of gambling and betting services, operators are using alternative methods. This issue is very important for national security and needs to be taken seriously and immediately.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

8. Concern over prevailing issue of air pollution in North India and its impact

SHRI RAGHAV CHADHA: Today, North India is covered in a blanket of smoke and with every breath we are inhaling the smoke of several cigarettes and bidis. Air pollution is not just an issue of Delhi, but it is an issue of the entire North India. Pollution knows no borders and today, areas like Bhagalpur, Muzaffarnagar, Vidisha, Noida, Hapur, Bhiwani, Bhiwadi, Agra and Faridabad have more air pollution than Delhi. A study by IIT shows that burning of stubble is one of the reasons for air pollution, not the only reason, but still the entire blame is put on the farmers. No farmer burns stubble intentionally, but burns it out of compulsion. This year, more than 70 percent decline has been seen in cases of stubble burning in our state Punjab. If we talk about its solution, the machines like Happy Seeder and Paddy Chopper, two to three thousand rupees per acre are spent from the farmer's pocket to run those machines. If we give two and a half thousand rupees per acre to the farmers of Punjab and Haryana to get rid of this stubble, then not a single farmer of Punjab will burn stubble. The Government of India will contribute two thousand rupees and the Punjab government will contribute 500 rupees for this purpose. Its long term solution is - crop diversification, that is, we will have to move from paddy cultivation to cotton, maize, pulses, oilseeds.

(Shri Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Shri Manas Ranjan Mangaraj, Shrimati Ranjeet Ranjan and Shrimati Rajani Ashokrao Patil also associated.)

9. Concern over Decline in Medal Tally at Olympic Games

SHRI AYODHYA RAMI REDDY ALLA: Despite substantial focus and an investment of approximately Rs. 500 crores in last three years for participation in the Paris Olympics and, apart from spending more than Rs. 100 crores for athletes, India, unfortunately, in the overall medal tally got a very disappointing rank of 71. What is our strategy, as a country, to place ourselves in the global platform, especially when we are becoming a fifth largest economy? While elite athletes benefit from the world-class training and also medical support, grass-root sports remain under-funded and overlooked. India's position in medal tally behind 70 countries underscores a lack of competitive edge strategy and structuring, revealing systemic issues that need very urgent attention. Each State has to see what is the strategy that needs to be provided and there is also a need to see what gaps are there in corporate sports and other sport societies. We need to do a diagnosis of all that and then prepare a roadmap for our entire sports pattern. .

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

10. Concern over the Functioning of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in Assam

SHRI AJIT KUMAR BHUYAN: Assam has been in the forefront since British Era in the matter of its natural resources in the form of oil, coal, natural gas, tea, etc. The Digboi Oil Refinery was established by British. The regional set-up of ONGC in Nazira was entrusted with the responsibility of exploration and production of crude products in the North-Eastern part of the country. But now instead of expansion of its activities in a systematic design, some functions are being shifted to Delhi or other places. The functions relating to tender, finance, logistics, etc., are some of those functions which are being shifted.

A strong resentment has grown up in public mind for these actions. I, urge upon the Government to see to it that no activities or functions of Assam asset of ONGC is shifted out to any place of the country.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

11. Demand to construct Flyover (RoB) at Birpara and Kamakhyaguri in West Bengal

SHRI PRAKASH CHIK BARAIK: There are two important railway flyovers in Alipurduar district - one is Birpada which is in Madarihat assembly constituency of Alipurduar district and the other is Kamakhyaguri railway flyover, which is in Kumargaon assembly constituency. After these two flyovers, there is Rural Hospital and State General Hospital. Most of the accident victims or patients have to face inconvenience at that place due to lack of flyover and ROB. The serious problem in this is that most of the patients have died there due to lack of ROB. Efforts should be made to build these two flyovers as soon as possible. The district administration and the state government have investigated the amount of land needed for this and have sent its report to the railways. The dolomite siding at Dalgaon station should be shifted as soon as possible.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

12. Demand to enhance Safety and Security of Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Department of Atomic Energy, Kolkata

SHRI SAMIK BHATTACHARYA: There is a serious security threat to the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics. The premier richest institution under the Department of Atomic Energy was established by the eminent scientist, Meghnad Saha, and its foundation stone was laid by Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. The northern part of the wall of entire institution is a high security zone, and all the Departments of Atomic Energy Establishment are specially protected under Atomic Energy Act, 1962. The head of the department at the Salt Lake Institute in Kolkata has been to the police station four times. There are some unauthorized people present outside the northern part of the wall and they have reached there in huge numbers. All are Rohingyas and Bangladeshi infiltrators. I request the Government that it should immediately evict those persons from that particular place.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

13. Demand to adopt Alternative Means to address the Problem of Stubble Burning

SHRI BRIJ LAL: Till the 1990s, stubble was not a problem for us. The farmers used to make good use of it as animal fodder. When we planted potatoes, we used to put it on top of them and it was used in it. Today, burning stubble is creating a big problem for the environment. Today our millet is going around the world, it is being used, it is beneficial for health. So now we should grow it in place of paddy. A huge use of stubble is being done in our country itself in Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, where mushrooms are produced from it. This mushroom grows in summer, at 35 to 40 degrees. It is called paddy mushroom. We can encourage farmers to produce paddy mushroom in our country. Another technology has come up, in which stubble pellets are made. Many of our thermal power stations use it. We can give stubble to cow shelters. Animals also eat it. When the stubble rots there, it becomes a very good manure.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

14. Need to increase the Minimum Support Price of Sugar

SHRI DHANANJAY BHIMRAO MAHADIK: The Indian sugar industry has a long and rich history. India is the largest sugar producer in the world. The country's sugar

industry plays a very important role in the Indian economy. This sugar industry is the source of livelihood for the families of more than 10 crore sugarcane producing farmers in the country. There are about 550 sugar mills in the country. This industry also provides employment to about 5 lakh people. The gross value of the crop produced by sugarcane producers is more than Rs 80,000 crore, but this entire industry depends on climate change. Sometimes less, sometimes more rain also causes huge losses to this industry. The Government has also fixed the MSP of sugar at Rs 3,100. On one hand, the FRP is increasing every year, but the MSP of sugar is limited to Rs 3,100. Due to this, sugar mills are incurring huge losses. All the organizations of the country, ISMA, National Sugar Federation have demanded from the Government that the selling price of sugar, MSP should be fixed at Rs. 42, so that sugarcane producing farmers will get more benefit and they will also be able to get payment for their crop on time and the sugar mills which are running in loss or which are on the verge of closure will also get relief.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

15. Request to use Artificial Intelligence for Monitoring the Endangered wildlife species

SHRI NEERAJ DANGI: The country is facing a big challenge regarding conservation of wildlife, especially endangered wild animals like leopard, cheetah etc. For the conservation of endangered wildlife in the country, their monitoring should be done through artificial intelligence. From its size, its movement etc., it can be ascertained which animal it is, what activity it is doing in the forest and where it is doing the activity. Wildlife conservation plays an essential role in the welfare of our environment and future human welfare. With the help of a strong system like Artificial Intelligence, the work of saving both wildlife and humans can be done.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

GOVERNMENT BILLS

(i) The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI HARDEEP SINGH PURI), moving the motion for consideration of the Bill, said: I would like to share few points with regard to the proposed Amendment Bill, which is being placed for consideration before this august House. As the world's fastest growing large economy, India is on its journey from a current GDP of four trillion dollars on to Viksit Bharat by 2047. This is a resolve as espoused by the Hon'ble Prime Minister. The entire nation, our people and the Government are steadfastly committed to ensuring the successful fulfilment of this resolve. The energy is actually the lifeline for the growth of any economy. It is a sure sign of growing economic activity and GDP growth, when energy consumption levels are seen to be rising. For any democratically elected Government, it becomes essential to ensure that the three challenges of availability, affordability and sustainability are met. I can say that in the last ten years, all three have been ensured. We are perhaps the only country in the world where prices of energy have actually come down where in the neighbourhood they have not only shot up but there are very serious issues of non-availability. There is clearly a very large gap between what we produce and what we consume. It is vital to increase exploration and production of oil and gas, both onshore and offshore. It is necessary to address those policies and laws which inhibit our efforts. I would like to submit to this august House that exploration and production, by its very definition, requires heavy investment and involves invariably a long gestation period. The Government went from production-sharing regimes to

revenue-sharing regimes, which are much simpler to implement. The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licencing Policy (HELP) was introduced in 2016, under which 144 blocks have been awarded. Of these, 131 blocks are under active exploration. Cumulatively, these entailed an investment of US\$ 3.37 billion. Under the Open Acreage Licencing Policy (OALP) from round I to VIII, discoveries have been made. For a long period, our exploration and production efforts were undermined by the fact that one million square kilometres was regarded as a No-go area. In round IX of the Open Acreage Licencing Policy 38 per cent of bids received have been in that No-go area. We have also made almost all the geological data available on the National Data Repository. These measures by the Government have borne fruit in increasing focus towards exploration, production and in attracting large-scale investment. We are making these changes in the oil and gas sector and reforms to make these fit with the current needs and market conditions. We carried out large-scale stakeholder consultations for this purpose. During consultation, it was informed by them that our legal framework required not just tweaking, but major changes. We carried out a detailed assessment of the present legal framework, and felt that there was a need to align the existing framework with the requirements of the current situation in the world. We needed to tweak the existing framework with the requirements of contemporary times, including the emergence of new fuels, of new technologies and new frameworks to improve the viability of oil blocks. Alternate dispute resolution mechanisms envisaged in the law will ensure that disputes can be resolved in a timely, fair and cost-effective manner. This Bill seeks to eliminate punishments in the form of imprisonment and provide for enhanced penalties to ensure compliance. All above provisions intend to substantially improve the Ease of Doing Business and make India an attractive destination for enhanced production of oil and gas to monetize our vast reserves. We needed a more attractive and collaborative approach between the Government and the contractors and move away from regulatory control. This Amendment Bill not only give a fillip for further investments in the oil and gas sector but also promote the Ease of Doing Business. Vide this Amendment Bill, we not only intend to do away with the regulation of mining activities but also to provide a simple, transparent and stable regime for petroleum leases and petroleum production activities. The Government is overhauling the prevalent multiple licences and lease document paradigm in favour of a single document framework. In order to remove uncertainty, the Government proposes to substitute an acrimonious mode of dispute resolution with a fast and predictable adjudication mechanism and arbitration for leases and authorisations granted by the Government. The Government is on course to reduce our committed greenhouse gas emissions and to become Net Zero by 2070. The amendments have also been proposed keeping that commitment in mind. Efforts towards promotion of new and green technologies will facilitate the development of comprehensive energy projects. After these amendments, The Government is confident of enhanced participation by oil and gas entities in future bid rounds. But legislation is needed to ensure that what the Government has done so far, and, what it needs to do in future, meets the energy requirements of this important sector, which contributes some 19-20 per cent to Government revenues.

SHRI SHAKTISNH GOHIL: Originally, oilfields, minerals and mines were all regulated together. Today it is just 'oilfields'. We need to be self-sufficient in the oil sector. The more we can extract locally through exploration, the better it is for us. But the sad part is that our domestic production is very less than what we need. Mumbai High, Neelam and Heera fields account for 59 per cent of domestic natural gas production, and these three sites were developed between 1976 and 1984. The minister's speech did not explain what are the shortcomings in today's law that can be removed to increase domestic production. The speech did not mention what provisions are there in this Bill that will bring in more participation from across the world. I would request that the new amendment not to be applied to existing

contractors, licensees and leaseholders. In this amendment bill, Helium has been excluded from the definition of mineral oil. I request that it be included in oil and gas production so that Helium can be explored and extracted from oil and gas shale blocks. Another section of this Bill will give very wide discretionary powers to the Central Government to make rules regarding petroleum leases. The Government should continue with the existing arbitration provision as per the model production sharing contracts, else international oil and gas companies may view it as a risk where the Government has disproportionate power to control or intervene in contractual disputes. There should be a provision that oil and gas companies will not be required to share commercially sensitive data obtained by them as part of ongoing petroleum operations for a period of ten years from the date of first obtaining the data. The amendment Bill provides for designating an adjudicating authority to conduct investigations and impose penalties under the provisions of the law. Another clause of the Bill provides that no officer below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India will be designated as the adjudicating authority. Our Joint Secretary will redress the dispute. There should be an independent arbitrator in case of any dispute between the Government and the individual. It is beyond my understanding that the Government wants to do away with this provision. According to the CAG report, the amount of water injection required to extract maximum oil during 2015 to 2019, was less than the requirement in all oil exploration fields, due to which, ONGC lost thousands of crores in a single quarter. The Government also suffered loss of tax revenue. If the Government is concerned about domestic oil production, then it should pay attention to this first.

SHRI CHUNNILAL GARASIYA: I would like to present my views on the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024. Today, every effort has been made to bridge the huge gap between the requirement and supply of oil in the country. Due to India's rapid economic growth, the demand for energy is increasing and it will be doubled in future. Earlier, the gap between the demand and domestic production of crude oil and natural gas was met through imports. Currently, India's import dependence is more than 85 percent. The Government has taken many steps to increase the production of crude oil and natural gas and to diversify the sources of fuel to make the purchase of fuel in line with the sustainability goal. The Government has taken steps to increase the availability of energy through biofuels. Biogas has given a new dimension to the gas sector. Energy self-sufficiency has been achieved by improving gas exploration and energy security in the state, reducing India's dependence on other countries to meet the country's energy needs.

MS. DOLA SEN: The Government's intent to update this Act as per today's market is good. I want to highlight some macro issues. India continues to import more than 85 per cent of its crude oil needs and 50 per cent of its natural gas needs. This dependency is projected to only rise as domestic production continues to fall. Our crude oil imports from Russia in June, 2024 surpassed that of June, 2023. Domestic production of indigenous crude oil fell by 3 per cent while imports increase by 6.4 per cent. The refining sector also showed a 1.9 per cent decrease in total crude oil processed in August, 2024. Our petroleum reserves can provide cover for only 9.5 days of the national demand. If a crisis were to strike tomorrow, we would have no resources. Another thing that I want to protest is that the profitable public sector undertakings like Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum are in the list of disinvestments of the Union Government's Viksit Bharat Scheme. This should not be done. We are observing that the international crude prices are decreasing, but the Union Government of India is making the citizens pay higher prices for petrol domestically and, increasing it day by day. It is astonishing and shameful. India is in no position to achieve its net zero emissions target by 2030. It could be delayed by at least a decade. I want to mention one more important policy matter. In the regions, where oil fields are being detected, the

densely populated areas' common people must get rehabilitation according to the law. In the tribal areas, the Forest Right Act must be maintained.

SHRI N.R. ELANGO: I rise on behalf of my party to insist that this Bill be referred to a Select Committee and to have wider deliberations with the States before passing. The Bill seeks to expand the meaning of 'mineral oil'. Also, the word 'mine' is omitted from the definition. The word 'mining lease' is replaced with 'petroleum lease'. In Clause (d) of Section 3, the scope is expanded to give retrospective effect to the lease agreements entered prior to this Amendment. And, in Clause 6 of the Bill, it is proposed to amend the marginal heading of Section 6 by substituting the word 'mineral' with the word 'mineral oil'. But this had already been substituted in Act 67 of 1957, with effect from 1.6.1958. By changing mining lease to petroleum lease, the Central Government wants to take away the State Governments' interests. There was Nine Judge Bench judgment of the Supreme Court, delivered on 25th of July 2024, in which the rights of the State Governments under the scope of the MMDR Act, were considered. Present Bill was introduced on 5th of August, 2024. In it, 'mining' word is being replaced only to take away the rights of the States. Rule 5 of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 1959, stipulates that the license can be given only by the State Government with the prior approval of the Central Government. Now, what will happen to that rule if this Act is amended. The Parliament, while enacting this Act, also has to consider as to what effects the petroleum mining is going to have on biodiversity and on agricultural fields because agriculture is more important than petrol.

SHRI YERRAM VENKATA SUBBA REDDY: The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024 is crucial for strengthening our nation's energy, security and economic growth. Today, our economy is the fifth largest in the world, and our energy requirements have grown tremendously. The way we find, extract and use energy has also become much more advanced. The Bill aims to create a modern energy system that is efficient, environment-friendly and open for investment. The Bill changes the definition of 'mineral oils' to include more types of hydrocarbons, and it is a major step towards allowing India to explore and use a wider range of energy resources. However, the scope of this definition is broad, lacking clarity on the regulatory boundaries for emerging resources such as hydrogen and carbon capture. This ambiguity could lead to regulatory overlap and conflicts between the existing environmental and industrial policies. The Bill introduces a new concept called 'petroleum lease', which is designed to give investors stability and predictability as the rules and terms will remain consistent during the lease period. It will attract global investors. The Bill removes criminal penalties for breaking certain rules and replaces them with financial fines and structured systems for resolving disputes. This makes the environment more business-friendly. I have some suggestions also. There is requirement of specialized infrastructure for exploration and workforce in the process. Bill's provisions will require significant infrastructural investments. Central Government should develop a comprehensive funding mechanism that supports States in creating necessary infrastructure for advanced petroleum operations. In conclusion, while the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill 2024, aims to create a progressive regulatory framework, addressing these issues will ensure its effectiveness in fostering sustainable energy growth while balancing economic, social, and environmental concerns.

***SHRI MANAS RANJAN MANGARAJ:** it would have been better if the Government had held discussions with the Opposition parties before preparing and introducing the Oil Fields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024, in Parliament. Coal, fossil fuels and natural gas are exhaustible resources. While fuel is an

* Spoke in Odia.

essential requirement in today's world, it is also depleting. Therefore, it must be used judiciously. Exploration of new areas is necessary, but before enacting any law on this subject, the Government must see the realities on the ground and the interests of the people affected by such projects. The Amendments introduced in the current Bill appear to centralize all powers with the Central Government. While the new legislation emphasizes crude oil production and encourages drilling and exploration activities, it indirectly increases the risk of pollution. The lack of transparency in the provisions of this Amendment Bill is deeply concerning. Any increase in the price of fuel or petroleum will lead to a rise in market prices and inflation. Furthermore, the provision for imprisonment in the 1948 Act has been abolished, which is another matter of concern.

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI: I rise to participate in this discussion on Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill. I appreciate the Minister's intention to increase the production in India. The experts have opined about the exploration plans in my State that the Centre's oil exploration plans of Kanyakumari Coast would severely impact fertile fishing ground and marine diversity. Similarly, hydrocarbon exploration, especially in Tanjore and delta areas, will affect the agriculture. Agriculture is the main thing throughout Tamil Nadu. That is why, during the AIADMK period, we banned this to save the farmers of the Tanjore area.

SHRI GHANSHYAM TIWARI: This Bill has been brought in keeping with the *Panchpran* under which the Government of India has decided to change all such laws that smack of slavery or are not in tune with the present times. It has been brought to make India a developed and self-reliant India by 2047. Energy is a very significant requirement for the rapidly growing Indian economy and to fulfill it, we will have to make new laws and explore new areas. We have to import 85 percent of the oil. Today, what is required is that our dependence on imports should be reduced, and our production should increase. Very wrong statement was made here that oil prices have come down in the world and not in India. Under the leadership of Modi ji, India is the only country where oil prices have come down by 10 to 15 percent from the Corona period till now. Oil and gas prices may have increased in the world, but here they have come down by 15 percent. During the Ukraine-Russia war, European countries and America imposed sanctions on Russia and also pressured India not to buy crude oil from Russia, but India did not compromise with its national interests and we continued to buy crude oil from Russia and bought it at 30 percent less price. Just a few days ago, a breaking news came that India has become a bigger exporter of petrol to Europe than America and Saudi Arabia. India manufactured petrol from the crude oil purchased from Russia and Iran and exported it to Europe. Prices in the country have remained under control due to this. Along with this, today we have also started manufacturing ethanol, which reduced imports by Rs 1 lakh crore. A new institute was established for solar energy. We also started work for bio diesel and renewable energy. Mining is being separated from this in the Bill. Several hon'ble Members enquired why mining is being separated from this. I want to tell that now mining has become a completely different sector. It has also been provided in the Bill that big foreign and technically strong companies can do exploration work in those areas in India where there is a possibility of finding hydrocarbons, natural gas or petroleum products. This will increase our production capacity. This law has been brought with this vision. During the 10 years of the UPA Government, not a single mining lease was given and no mining work was done. Now mining has gained momentum. The definition of mineral oil has been changed and mining and petroleum activities have been separated. For dispute resolution, the provision of jail has been deleted and provision of arbitration has been made in the Bill. Companies have the liberty of the arbitration outside India as well. Provision of adjudicating authority and appeal has also been made in the Bill, so that justice can be

delivered on time. Just now the honourable Member was saying that if mining takes place there, then agriculture and fisheries will be harmed. To protect this, a provision of a community area has been made in the Bill which provides that where mining will take place, protection to the people of that area in terms of jobs and their economic condition has been provided in this Bill. The Bill is a very big step towards making the country self-reliant in the energy sector. I support it.

DR. KALPANA SAINI: The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill amends the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948. It regulates the exploration and extraction of natural gas and petroleum. I stand up to present my views in support of the Bill. The NDA Government under the leadership of the honourable Prime Minister has continuously continued its commitment of reform, perform and transform. The definition of mineral oils has also been expanded in the Bill. Petroleum and natural gas have been included in the definition of mineral oils. The Bill not only marks a reform in India's energy sector but is also a visionary step to lead our country towards energy self-sufficiency. India meets 85 per cent of its crude oil requirement and about 50 per cent of its natural gas requirement through imports. This situation not only puts a huge strain on our foreign exchange reserves but also undermines our energy security. The main objective of the Bill is to promote domestic production so that our dependence on imports is reduced and the country's energy needs can be met from indigenous sources. The definition of mineral oils includes non-conventional energy sources like crude oil, natural gas, coalbed methane etc. This move will encourage investment in the country. Provisions like introduction of petroleum leasing and permission for international arbitration will attract global and domestic investors. A stable and favourable environment has been created for oil and gas producers by simplifying the long-term lease regime and penalty provisions. Today the whole world is accepting that in a few years India will be the third economy of the world. The energy sector will play a major role in this growing economy. Exploration and production of these resources will not only lead to economic growth but will also accelerate employment generation. This Bill is not just a legal document but it will also be an unprecedented step towards energy self-reliance for India. It will boost domestic production and strengthen India's energy security. Therefore, I fully support this bill and request all the honourable members to vote in favour of this bill.

DR. FAUZIA KHAN: The question is whether fraudulent activities are not possible at all in this area? If yes, then with whom should the law sympathize more? With the one who does injustice or with the one who is subjected to injustice. It is important to keep this in mind while making rules and therefore it is not appropriate to decriminalize this law. This will not be a significant deterrent for people or companies engaged in mineral oil operations. While focusing on Ease of Doing Business, this aspect cannot be compromised. Clause 5 (3) introduces a new sub-section promoting stable terms for petroleum leases. While this will help encourage investment in the sector by promising stability, it will also restrict the Government flexibility to review its terms in case of adverse developments. Terms and conditions, therefore, should be dynamic rather than fixed. I would like to mention a scam that took place in Maharashtra in 2012 and 2013. This is regarding gate passes that are issued for bitumen. These gate passes are totally Government-controlled. The refineries said that they did not issue these passes. The people concerned printed duplicate passes and used them all over the State. An FIR was filed against the contractor, as is usually done, but nothing was done against the officials with whose connivance all this took place. I request the Minister to please take up this issue and make sure that FIRs are filed against those concerned because if you don't take people to task, then fraudulent activities will go on.

DR. SIKANDER KUMAR: This Bill is a monumental step towards transforming India's energy landscape by enhancing investors' confidence and positioning Bharat as a key player in the global energy market. The Bill seeks to establish a framework that fosters investment in both traditional and cleaner energy sources by redefining mineral oils to encompass cleaner energy sources like hydrogen, aligning with Modi Government's goal of increasing non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2.5 times. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas took a far-reaching decision regarding de-linking of petroleum operation from mining. De-linking was crucial for addressing environmental concern affecting ecologically sensitive regions like Assam, where improper management could lead to irreversible damage. The present Bill is designed to create a conducive environment for investment by ensuring policy stability, streamlining regulatory processes, and providing mechanism for dispute resolution. Further, the Bill paves the way for increased foreign exploration in Bharat by establishing a more stable and transparent regulatory environment. By allowing international companies to engage in petroleum operation with clear terms and a dispute resolution mechanism, the Bill aims to attract foreign investments and expertise. This strategic move not only boosts domestic production but also positions Bharat as a competitive player in the global energy market reducing reliance on imports and enhancing energy security.

SHRI P. P. SUNEER: This Bill is yet another attempt by the Union Government to handover natural resources of the nation to corporate houses in the name of attracting investments and "Ease of Doing Business". It has become a pattern for the BJP to frame laws to suit corporate needs instead of what is good for the general public. The Bill seeks to legally separate petroleum and other naturally occurring hydrocarbons extraction from mining operations, with potentially disastrous consequences for the environment. The Bill is also an example of Government's double speak on promoting new and renewable energy sources and, at the same time, promoting oil extraction by private players. The Bill is explicitly promoting the loot of natural resources by diluting penalties in cases of violations. At the end, it is our understanding that State-led oil and natural gas enterprises, like the ONGC, should be prioritized instead of private players in the sector for the sake of the economy and the people.

SHRI MAHENDRA BHATT: India has also increased the production of crude oil significantly after independence. I am saying this because in a country where only a few states are involved in oil production, efforts are made by the governments to increase the production of crude oil and natural gas and it is a part of those efforts that today a big step is being taken in this direction by the Government of our country's Prime Minister Hon. Modi ji. A state like West Bengal, which can play a leading role in oil production, is not paying attention to it. West Bengal can earn benefit of Rs. 8000 crore from this. Oil production in India is continuously declining and after the Gulf War, the production capacity has fallen drastically. After the Government's decision to encourage the production of biogas, there is a possibility of an increase of 15 MMT per year, which will take shape after the passage of this Bill and will meet the consumption of natural gas in the transport sector, I can say this with confidence. The Government's aim is to reduce dependence on other countries in the field of petrol and gas. There are many bureaucratic hurdles related to production in the field of crude oil and gas. It is very important to instill confidence in any investor, because the oil sector is a very expensive sector, it requires a lot of capital investment. It was absolutely necessary to bring this Bill. Penalty creates problems for any sector. This is the first time that life imprisonment has been replaced with a financial penalty.

SHRI SANJAY SETH: This Bill is very important from the point of view of energy security, economic progress and self-reliance of the country. The importance of oil and gas sector is very crucial in the development and economy of any country. Under the visionary

leadership of Prime Minister, Hon'ble Narendra Modi Ji, our country is making unprecedented progress in this sector. Today, India has become the fourth largest refiner in the world. Our Government's policies have reduced subsidies in the oil and gas sector in the country by 85 percent.

SHRI SANJAY SINGH: It is mentioned in this Bill that you will promote investment in this sector, promote different corporate houses. One of the main objectives of this Bill is that you want to bring more companies to make profits in the sector in which ONGC, government sector, *Maharatna* companies are making profits, which has made a profit of Rs 40,000 crore in the year 2023-24. Through this bill, you are snatching the rights of the state governments and want all the rights with the center, which will also hurt the federal structure and your dispute with the states will increase further. This is also fundamentally against the federal structure, which other colleagues were just mentioning here.

DR. V. SIVADASAN: This Bill is not for the people of the country. It is for the corporate houses. Affordable energy is very crucial and essential for the welfare of the State. The democratically-elected Government should ensure the welfare of the common people. But, here the Government is walking in a very different direction. Sir, the Government is promoting privatisation of our great natural resources, including petroleum and natural gas. The aim of the big multinational companies is only to earn profit through production or distribution of PNG. The Government should not allow the exploitation of common people. The Government should control the price of petroleum products and it should restore and increase the subsidies. The Union Government is imposing heavy taxes upon the petroleum products. The Central Government is imposing different surcharges on oil price. The Union Government collects a huge amount as tax. The LPG refill cost was Rs. 410 for a 14.2-kilogram cylinder on March 1st, 2014. It has now become Rs. 823 for a 14.2-kilogram LPG cylinder. The Government should protect the interests of the common people. They stand for the people and not for the corporate houses.

The hon'ble Minister, replying to the debate, said: The oil and gas sector is one that involves heavy investments and also has a long gestation period. The period between 2006 and 2014 is termed as 'the dull period'. I want to assure all the Members that this is not about handing over to the corporate sector, this is not about taking the powers of the States away. The petroleum mining leases will still have to be granted by the State Governments, no matter what changes are brought by this. This sector which involves heavy investment has about five major oil companies in the world namely, Italian major, Eni, Australian companies, BHP Billiton and Santos, almost all of them came here and were driven away from the country for one reason or the other. This was a natural consequence of the kind of policies we followed. One of the major challenges during this period was non-availability of drilling rigs. Out of 3.5 million sq km of sedimentary basin, one million sq km you closed. And in the remaining area, you put restrictions. We allowed the eye to be taken off the ball. This was neglect of E&P. This neglect was bordering on criminal neglect. We are paying the price for it now. Then came 2014. That is when policies began to change. That is when production sharing agreements gave way to revenue sharing agreements. In 2015-16, they introduced major changes. They introduced revenue sharing agreements. Then a little later, we cleaned up one million sq km of the sedimentary basin which was a no-go area. Dispute resolution has been made much more objective and quick. This Bill includes, stability of lease, definition of updation, single lease, decriminalization of provisions, penalty increment, sharing of infrastructure, carbon capture and sequestration.

Arbitration continues for disputes under lease and contracts. Adjudication has only been introduced for violation of Acts and Rules which are framed there under. There is a saving clause which protects existing contracts and agreements. Nothing in this Act prohibits development of comprehensive energy projects under special scheme created with concerned Ministries such as the Department of Atomic Energy and the Ministry of Earth Sciences. Rules for sharing data, Director General of Hydrocarbons for better monitoring, sharing of infrastructure to enable small operators to make use of existing infrastructure and not make any unnecessary heavy investment in new infrastructure when infrastructure is already available, etc., are all new provisions in the Bill. In any discovered field, after the first year, production can decline by four per cent or even a little more. An hon. Member raised the point of our Strategic Petroleum Reserves being only enough to cover seven days of utilization. This reserve itself now covers 72 days. We are trying to take it up to the international norm. We have a refining capacity today of something like 258.6 million metric tonnes per annum. We are taking it up to 310 million metric tonnes per annum. It was said that we are not diversifying; we are very dependent. The facts are that for many years, if you look at our imports in terms of source, they came from 27 countries. Today, they are coming from 39 countries. . We import 20 billion dollars of energy from the United States. We consume, on an average, 5.4 million barrels of crude oil in a day. Our import is going to go up because our economy is growing at 6.5 per cent and energy is the driving force of GDP growth in many respects. In February, 2022, Russian oil became available at discounted prices. Now, we don't take a decision in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas as to where we should import from. Our traders in the private sector, well-known companies and our oil marketing companies float tenders for import of oil at the point of importation. Wherever they get the crude from and the grade of crude that they are looking for, they will import from there. So, the availability from one source because of the cheaper oil available has gone up. So, the energy business, and the oil and gas business is very complicated. The hon. Prime Minister has ensured availability. There was not a single instance in the last ten years when crude oil or petrol or diesel was not available. And it is affordable. In India, the price has come down over the last three years. Globally, it has gone up. It is because the Central Government reduced excise duty and the BJP-ruled States brought down their VAT.

Our natural gas is going up by 18 per cent every year. If in 2000, 2005 and 2010 some farsighted decisions had been taken, today we would not be in the situation of even having to import 50 per cent. In a recent discovery, ONGC is producing, or going to produce very soon, 40,000 barrels a day off the Kakinada coast. Today, India is supplying a cylinder of gas at the most economical price anywhere in the world. Sir in 2014, there were 14 crore connections of LPG, now these have increased to 33 crores, which means virtually the entire population is covered now through LPG. Prime Minister brought the prices of LPG cooking medium for Ujjwala beneficiary families at 5-6 Rupees for a day and Rs. 14-15 for those who are outside the periphery of Ujjwala. Sir, nowhere in the world, clean cooking fuel being provided at this cost to the entire population of the country.

In 2014, total biofuel blending in the country was 1.4 percent. Last month, 16.9 percent ethanol bio-fuel blending was done. PM has said, by 2030, we have to take this blending to 20 percent. Because of the success of 10 percent blending, we were able to bring down target of 20 per cent from 2030 to 2025. I can claim that by the time we finish this, by October, 2025 our blending will be 20 percent. When we did 10 per cent blending, we saved Rs. 91,000 crores which have gone to our farmer brethren. In fact, the urja has also contributed to our agricultural sector. Green hydrogen is fuel of the future, and it will succeed because India has both demands, it will have the production, and it will have the

consumption. The fact is that we have already taken steps. In 2016, production sharing, revenue sharing contracts, and opening of one million square kilometers has been done.

The change we are going to bring, 38 percent bids that we received in 9th round in our OALP have come in that one million square kilometers which was opened up in 2022. This Bill, will ensure that investor will have more confidence to come here. There will be one lease, one license and if there is any dispute there will be predictability and stability to manage even that too. The Government has nothing to hide on this. This is a win-win legislation for the States. ONGC made some discoveries. If no state implements provisions for the area of 99 Square Kilometer, they stand to lose something like Rs. 7000 to Rs. 8000 crores. The money would belong to the State Governments in terms of revenue and in terms of equity. I want to assure everyone that this legislation changes the terminology. It brings in predictability, stability and there is no attempt to reward any big person. This is a national asset and I think, if we do not exploit the national asset now because our energy needs are such, there may come a time, after ten or fifteen years, when there will be a lid put on all fossil fuel utilization, when only green energy can be used. In India, we need fossil fuels, I think, for another twenty years. We need to bring this legislation here in order to provide a win-win confidence not only to our own operators, but also to the foreign investors so that they can come and do business here with a view to benefitting everyone.

The motion for consideration of the Bill was adopted.

Clauses etc., were adopted.

The Bill was passed.

(ii) THE BHARATIYA VAYUYAN VIDHEYAK, 2024

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI KINJARAPU RAMMOHAN NAIDU), moving the motion for consideration of the Bill, said: I move that the Bill to provide for regulation and control of the design, manufacture, maintenance, possession, use, operation, sale, export and import of aircraft and for matter connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

This Bill had been passed by the Lok Sabha in the last session. I would like to go a little bit into the brief of the present Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak. In 1911 the first Indian Aircraft Act was brought in the pre-Independence era by the British. In 1919, there was an International Convention for Regulation of Aerial Navigation. Once that convention was done in 1919, another Act was brought. The Indian Aircraft Act in 1934 took into account all the discussions that happened during that Convention. After that, in 1944, there was the Chicago Convention that promulgated another body, International Civil Aviation Organisation, which is still existent till now and it consists of 193 member States. In our country, right from 1934, when the existing Act originated, it has already been 90 years. In these 90 years, the Act has been amended 19 times. Now the International Civil Aviation Organisation, has recommended to India to bring a new legislation as per the present scenario. This is the base for us to bring this new Amendment -- Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak. Under Indian civil aviation, we have certain bodies. We have DGCA. We have the BCAS. We have the AAIB and if you look at the new Bill, we are bringing clear sections for powers of each of these bodies. After Narendra Modi ji has become the Prime Minister, you would have heard him constantly saying about civil aviation. When he talks about the country's growth, he wants the Indian civil aviation also to assist the growth of the country. We are witnessing that airports have reached to a staggering number. We had 74 airports in 2014. The number has almost doubled to 157 airports in the country and if you look at the

domestic air passenger traffic, it has also more than doubled. The fleet size, it used to be 400 in 2014, and now in 10 years, we have brought it to 813. The growth that we have observed is just the tip of the iceberg and we believe civil aviation has a lot of potential to drive the economy of the whole country. We are looking at how to build our own aircraft here, how to skill our own people, how to bring more expertise into the industry that is why, one of the principal things that we are bringing in this new Act, is the definition for 'design', 'maintenance' and 'manufacture'. We are thoroughly defining all these three terms which are very important for the Indian aviation industry to go forward. Till now, if we say that we are trying to manufacture our own plane, we don't have any legislation which defines, the design of an aircraft, the airworthiness of an aircraft, the type certification of the aircraft. Under the leadership of hon'ble Prime Minister, we are strongly saying that India is at a stage where it can design, manufacture and maintain its own aircraft. We see that there is a huge potential to create economic activity and especially job creation. One job created in civil aviation industry leads to ultimately creating 6.7 times the number of jobs. It is very huge. We had a number of consultations with the public and with all the important stakeholders and all the other Ministries that are concerned. Now thousands of pilots are getting trained in this country. At present, there are 800 aircraft in the country, and you would be surprised at number of aircraft orders. It is more than 1500 right now and increasing every month. As we bring in these new planes into the market, we would need more pilots also. One aircraft would require up to 20 pilots. So, imagine how many pilots our country would need. But when they go for Commercial Pilot Licence training, one challenge they face is that they have to obtain the Radio Telephony Certificate and the Flight Radio Telephone Operator's licence. When we do this dual thing, there was a lot of inconvenience for pilots. We have a lot of young population who wants to aspire to become a pilot, we do not want them to see such challenges happening in the system. We thought that we have so much expertise with the DGCA, why don't we do the RTR licence and certificates within our system itself? That is the biggest change we have brought in here. Like I have said, we have amended the Act 21 times. The International Civil Aviation Organizations keep recommending us so many things, time and again, ICAO recommends to all countries to have a uniform harmonization of the laws. As it is important for us to follow the ICAO recommendations. As per the recommendations we cannot bring all the changes to the Parliament and so let us amend the principal Act itself. It is very important for us to have the backing in the principal legislation itself. Some problem that we faced earlier was that there was no appeal system. So, right now, we have put an appeal system which follows the principle of natural justice in the Act itself. There are some other provisions also in the appeal system. In this kind of system, we observed the small flaws that were existing in the industry. We tried rectifying them and include them in the Act itself. This is a very important legislation that we are doing because we realized that our civil aviation is the third biggest domestic sector in the whole world. We want more people to travel through air here which is becoming a reality also under the leadership of our Prime Minister. he is a man on a mission. In 2017, he launched the UDAN Scheme, which was very specific to connect these under-served and unserved airports of the country. Today, a staggering number of 602 routes have been started by UDAN in the last seven years which is a record in itself. As a Minister today, I am getting requests for more air connectivity. India has become so aspirational that everyone is dreaming and aspiring to have their own airport. We want to cater to those dreams. We want to build those airports because we feel if we can't do it today,

it will become a challenge tomorrow. We believe that there is a lot more to achieve for us in civil aviation. With the help of this Act, we are going to move into that direction.

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P. C. MODY,
Secretary-General.

rssynop@sansad.nic.in

****Supplement covering rest of the proceedings is being issued separately.