

RAJYA SABHA

*SUPPLEMENT-I

TO

SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

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GOVERNMENT BILLS

(i) The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025 - as passed by Lok Sabha - Contd.

SHRI HARSH VARDHAN SHRINGLA: I believe India is at a decisive stage in its energy journey. The SHANTI Bill is a landmark reform that will shape the civil nuclear sector for generations. It modernises the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, ends fragmented governance, and establishes a liberalised, investment-ready nuclear framework while fully protecting national security and public safety. From 2020 to 2022, as Foreign Secretary, I was the ex-officio Member of the Atomic Energy Commission. I witnessed extensive discussions on liberalising the nuclear sector, and I am pleased that the SHANTI Bill represents the conclusion of that long process. In 2010, the UPA Government enacted the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, linked to the Indo-US Nuclear Agreement of 2005, to attract foreign investment. However, due to serious flaws in the law, not a single foreign-funded nuclear project came to India. The Congress Government set a target of 63 gigawatt nuclear capacity by 2032, but could not even achieve 7 gigawatt. Today, the same parties oppose foreign investment and private participation in the nuclear sector. I recall that in 2008, disagreements within the same coalition led to a No-Confidence Motion. Parties that once supported foreign investment in the nuclear sector are now opposing it.

I recall that at the COP26 Summit in Glasgow in 2021, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi committed that by 2030, 50 per cent of India's installed power capacity would come from renewable energy. I am pleased to state that this target has been achieved five years ahead of schedule, with more than half of our nearly 500 gigawatt capacity now coming from clean energy sources. While renewable energy is vital, grid stability requires a strong base load, and nuclear energy plays a critical role in providing round-the-clock, carbon-free power. As coal plants are phased out and electricity demand rises sharply by 2040, nuclear energy will remain central to sustainability, grid stability and energy security. The SHANTI Bill, often misunderstood, allows regulated private, foreign and joint venture participation in nuclear power generation, while all strategic activities such as enrichment and fuel management remain with the Government of India. This is not privatization, but accountable partnership. The vision of Prime Minister Modi is to raise nuclear capacity from about 9 gigawatt today to 100 gigawatt by 2047. This requires massive investment, which makes private participation essential, as seen earlier in the success of power, telecom and defence sectors, leading to self-reliance and global leadership.

India's nuclear technology foundation is completely robust and indigenous. Our PHWRs, Fast Breeder Reactor program, and 700 MW reactors utilize more than 90 percent domestic content. The SHANTI bill will accelerate Atmanirbhar Bharat, create high-skilled jobs, and encourage advanced manufacturing. Regarding the questions raised about private sector participation, I want to

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state that there is not just some interest, but significant interest from a large number of private companies. Globally, too, nuclear energy is advancing through a joint model of government and private capital in countries like the UK, the US, Canada, France, and China. India is no different. In historical context, despite the discriminatory global framework established after 1967 and China's aggression, India did not pursue the nuclear option for a long time. In 1998, under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, India decisively established its nuclear capability through the Pokhran tests. Unfortunately, even then, some leaders showed hesitation regarding India's nuclear power, which reflected a lack of national confidence.

I believe that in 2008, India seized the opportunity to break free from the shackles of diplomatic isolation, and today, *SHANTI* Bill, it is time to take that initiative forward and bring it to fruition. The Honourable Prime Minister has clearly stated that new ideas and new collaborations in every sector are essential for achieving the goal of a developed India by 2047. Opening up the nuclear sector in a controlled, regulated, and responsible manner is a decisive step in this direction. I also want to emphasize that the *SHANTI* Bill is not limited to power plants alone; it is a means to power India's development journey, protect industries, create skilled jobs, and ensure energy security for future generations. I commend the government's foresight and courage and urge support for this historic reform.

DR. FAUZIA KHAN: I want to say that Albert Einstein spoke of achieving peace not through force, but through understanding—that is the true meaning of "SHANTI." This bill is being touted as a historic reform in the name of a developed India, but beyond the rhetoric, it socializes the risks while privatizing the profits, and sidesteps fundamental questions of safety, waste management, and accountability. This directly relates to Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the protection of life and liberty. I want to raise four serious concerns. First, national security—the threat of private ownership and indirect foreign control with weak security provisions. Second, liability regime—the principle of absolute liability is being abandoned, shielding foreign suppliers and putting Indian taxpayers at risk. Third, liability limit—the limit of ₹3,000 crore for a nuclear accident is even less than the compensation paid for the Bhopal gas tragedy, while the potential damage could be far more extensive and long-lasting. Fourth, intergenerational justice—by increasing capacity today, we are leaving an unresolved burden of radioactive waste on future generations. All powers have been vested in the central government, therefore I want this bill to be sent to the JPC.

DR. PARMAR JASHVANTSINH SALAMSINH: I want to tell this august House that this is not just a bill related to energy, but a bill concerning the very existence of the nation and the health of its economy. That is why I stand here to support this bill. I congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh for this visionary bill, as it would not have been possible without their leadership. I would like to highlight the progress through some figures. In 2014, the total power generation capacity was 248.5 gigawatts, which has increased to 505 gigawatts by December 2025. Solar energy has increased from 2.6 gigawatts to 127 gigawatts, and wind energy from 21 to 53 gigawatts. Per capita electricity consumption has increased from 957 units to 1395 units, which is a hallmark of a developed nation. The power deficit has decreased from 4.2 percent to a mere 0.1 percent. As a doctor, I would say that just as the body needs balance, so does the nation. A balance between rapid development, security, and accountability is essential. Digital India, AI, and data centres require 24x7 stable energy. Solar and wind power are necessary, but nuclear energy is the foundational power source. Achieving the 100 gigawatt nuclear target by 2047 requires private capital, and this bill is a necessary and practical step in that direction.

Section 3 of this Bill gives the private sector the opportunity to build infrastructure, while the Government retains complete control over the fuel cycle and overall safety. This is not negligence, but rather strict control. Under this Bill, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board has been given statutory status, and the strictest monitoring system to date has been established. As a doctor, I know that powerful treatments are always administered with continuous monitoring—the same principle is applied here. Regarding the questions raised about liability limits, I want to say that unlimited liability is an illusion that prevents any project from moving forward. Through clear operator liability and mandatory insurance, this bill provides for real and immediate compensation. Regarding the issue of monopoly, this bill breaks the state monopoly and promotes competition and

innovation, as has been successfully done in South Korea and France. Energy poverty is the greatest disease, and this bill is the cure. From my medical experience, I want to say that nuclear energy is not just electricity, but a life-saving technology. Reactors are a source of radioisotopes used in cancer diagnosis and treatment. Under this Bill, the domestic production of isotopes such as Technetium-99m, Iodine-131, and Lutetium-177 will be possible. Food preservation in agriculture, desalination in water management, and targeted cancer treatment in healthcare—this Bill is a means of protecting not only energy but also life itself.

This Bill will prove to be a game-changer in the future. Currently, radioisotope production depends on our limited reactor capacity, but this bill allows the private sector and research institutions to establish research reactors and radiation facilities. This will make it possible for groups of hospitals to have medical reactors dedicated solely to life-saving isotopes, and the cost of cancer diagnostics will drop from thousands to hundreds of rupees. By liberalizing the research sector under Section 9 and securing patent rights under Section 38, we are unleashing the talent of Indian scientists to alleviate the suffering of Indian patients. Radiopharmaceuticals are often the last hope for life in rare diseases, and this bill makes that hope accessible. Finally, I would like to say that opposing this bill is tantamount to opposing progress, science, and the light of life itself. This Bill symbolizes the balance between the economy and human life. As a doctor, my clear prescription is that this House must pass this bill. India is ready for its next giant leap.

SHRI KARTIKEYA SHARMA: I want to state that the fundamental question behind the SHANTI Bill 2025 is clear—why, despite having the knowledge, resources, and scientific capability, did India fail to expand its nuclear energy program, and how can we rectify this now? Today, India is the world's third-largest energy consumer, yet nuclear energy accounts for only 1.7 percent of our energy mix, while countries like France, the US, and China are leveraging nuclear power to drive industry, create jobs, and fuel economic growth. I want to make it clear that this was not a failure of our scientists or technology, but a failure of policy. Decisions were delayed, risks were avoided, and reforms were postponed for far too long. The three-stage thorium program envisioned by Dr. Homi Bhabha languished for years. Projects like the Fast Breeder Reactor and Kakrapar were significantly delayed. The SHANTI Bill changes this situation. It ends over-centralization and allows for controlled private participation, which will bring in capital, timeliness, and accountability. The 100 GW nuclear target by 2047 requires approximately ₹20 lakh crore, an amount the government cannot bear alone. This bill opens the door for the necessary private investment while keeping safety and regulation firmly in the government's hands.

This Bill fully safeguards national security while opening the door for private companies to invest, build, and innovate, thereby accelerating project completion. This will reduce delays and allow India to rapidly expand its nuclear capabilities. The Bill also prepares India for future needs. Small Modular Reactors can provide 24/7 stable power to data centers, smart cities, and industrial areas, and can become the energy backbone of Digital India in remote regions. A robust nuclear ecosystem will contribute far beyond electricity generation, extending to medical isotopes, cancer treatment, agricultural research, and food preservation. This bill directly addresses the increased power requirements in the age of AI and the data economy. SHANTI Bill promotes private R&D investment, enhances training capabilities, and fully utilizes Indian scientific talent, thereby addressing the lack of private participation in R&D. Regarding concerns about safety, I want to state clearly that this Bill is based on understanding, not fear. Section 17 ensures strict oversight by the AERB, and no reactor can operate without continuous regulatory control. This Bill enhances capabilities, not risks. From the ancient Indian concept of 'Anu' to the vision of Dr. Homi Bhabha, this Government is realizing that vision today. This journey of nuclear renaissance is essential for achieving the goal of a developed India by 2047.

DR. K. LAXMAN: I believe this proposed Bill is not merely a technical or sectoral reform, but a confident national declaration of India's leadership in clean, reliable, and responsible energy for the 21st century. Under the leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has introduced bold reforms based on his principle of "Reform, Perform, and Transform"—reforms with foresight, development with security, and progress with dignity. I would also like to state that the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 was appropriate for India at that time, when our scientific and technical

institutions were being strengthened and it was necessary for the central government to have complete control over the nuclear sector. Today, India is a mature and self-reliant nation. This Bill not only modernizes the nuclear sector through controlled private participation but also clearly demonstrates this government's commitment and ambition towards clean and renewable energy.

This Government has taken bold decisions to achieve energy self-reliance, decarbonize the economy, and reach the net-zero target by 2070, which requires trillions of rupees and cannot be accomplished by the Government alone. Therefore, private participation is essential. In the last decade, nuclear power generation has increased by 60 percent and installed capacity by 71 percent. Ten new reactors are under construction, and a target of 100 gigawatts of nuclear capacity has been set for 2047, linked to the vision of a developed India. During the UPA era, the nuclear energy policy suffered from a lack of courage and clarity, while today the energy sector has transformed from a deficit to a surplus. *SHANTI* Bill is not just about energy reform, but also an enabler of the digital economy—especially for sectors like data centers, AI, and fintech. Under the Nuclear Energy Mission announced in the current budget, indigenous SMRs are being developed, and the 4x700 MW project in Mahi Banswara, Rajasthan, is an example of this. I fail to understand why there is so much "unrest" surrounding this *SHANTI* Bill. Nuclear energy is clean, affordable, and linked to social welfare. It generates 56,000 million units of clean electricity, preventing 49 million tons of carbon emissions, and provides electricity at approximately ₹3.83 per unit. It has direct benefits in health, agriculture, water, and sanitation. Therefore, this bill is essential for development, the environment, and public interest—all three.

Nuclear energy provides clean and stable electricity 24/7, while renewable sources are intermittent. Without nuclear energy, India would have to rely more heavily on coal and imports. Countries like France have met most of their electricity needs through nuclear power, and India must also move in this direction. I am fully confident that the *SHANTI* Bill will fulfill India's aspirations for its energy future. I also want to remind everyone that under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, India demonstrated its nuclear capabilities through the Pokhran tests, despite sanctions. From Vajpayee to Modi, we have had strong-willed leadership. This Bill draws a line between science and superstition, confidence and fear, and nation-building and politics. Prime Minister Modi thinks about the next generation, while the opposition focuses only on the next election. I say with full conviction that the country trusts Prime Minister Modi's leadership today, and this Bill will make India progressive and self-reliant, moving towards the goal of a developed India by 2047.

SHRIMATI MAHUA MAJI: The *SHANTI* Bill that the Central Government is introducing is not a bill for peace, but rather a bill for unrest and a threat to humanity. It is being justified in the name of decarbonization, but my years of research and experience show its serious negative consequences. Through four years of dedicated work, I researched the tribal communities affected by uranium mining in the Jadugora region of Jharkhand and wrote a book documenting the horrific reality of disabilities, cancer, infertility, and diseases passed down through generations. I have witnessed the breakdown of social relationships among the people there, as the fear of radiation still lingers. The by-products of nuclear reactors, such as uranium dust and plutonium, are extremely dangerous. History is a witness—events like Pokhran, Hiroshima-Nagasaki, and Chernobyl have shown that even a slight mistake or this technology falling into the wrong hands can lead to complete devastation. Therefore, I urge this House to seriously consider the human, social, and environmental consequences before passing this Bill.

I want to draw the House's attention once again to this grave threat. The Nobel Prize-winning book on the Chernobyl tragedy reveals that even today, people there yearn for simple foods like mushrooms, and hundreds of varieties remain banned. If nuclear energy and its by-products fall into the hands of a private or irresponsible operator, it could become a threat not just to one country, but to the entire world. I have seen the tailings ponds at Jadugora up close, where radioactive waste from uranium processing is stored. The alpha, beta, and gamma rays emitted from there do not respect any boundaries and expose people to serious illnesses. Once uranium is extracted from the ground, its harmful effects linger on the earth for millions of years. If the number of reactors increases, mining will also increase, and the entire country will have to pay the price. I also want to mention the tsunami and reactor accident in Japan, where the radiation crossed the Pacific Ocean. All

these incidents are well-documented. The Bhopal gas tragedy also taught us how negligent private companies can be and that our country's regulatory system is still inadequate. Therefore, I humbly urge you to think carefully and repeatedly before passing this Bill. Future generations will never forgive us if we ignore this threat today.

SHRI GHANSHYAM TIWARI: Speaking today on the SHANTI Bill, 2025, I want to make it clear that the names of bills are not mere formalities or trends, but rather reflect our sentiments, history, and culture. I thank Jairam Ramesh ji for mentioning history, but I disagree with the objections raised regarding the names. I want to state that the name 'SHANTI' was chosen because India's nuclear tradition is linked to peace. Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha himself said that India would use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Peace is fundamental to our culture, our mantras, and our philosophy. It is in this spirit that this bill has been named SHANTI. Similarly, names like 'Nari Shakti Vandan' have been chosen to honor the women of India's great tradition—Gargi, Maitreyi, Ahilya, Draupadi, Sita, and Rani Lakshmibai. 'Kartavya Path' was also named as such because the Prime Minister himself walks the path of duty and inspires the nation to follow the same path. Therefore, I believe that our cultural consciousness and national values are intrinsically linked to these names. That's why this name was chosen, and there's no need to discuss it now. This Bill is for India's future needs. I submit that this Bill looks to the future. Therefore, it is a Trikaladarshi Bill.

I want to say that this isn't just about power generation, but a need for India today. If India aims to become a developed nation by 2047, it must become self-reliant in energy. Energy conservation and energy production are both crucial needs today. By 2030, we need to generate 500 gigawatts of non-fossil power, of which the Hon'ble Prime Minister has taken India to 270 gigawatts. The goal is to achieve net zero by 2070, and to generate 100 gigawatts of power from nuclear energy by 2047. Today, 55 to 73 percent of our electricity generation comes from thermal coal. This coal also has to be imported, emitting carbon and being expensive. I have looked at renewable energy—solar and wind. Rajasthan has many solar parks, but solar requires a lot of land and doesn't generate electricity during the rainy season and at night. Wind energy also depends on wind. These are not sustainable, whereas nuclear energy is load-based, 24x7, and can provide continuous power for 60 years. Therefore, this energy is essential for us, and that is why we have to open this sector to foreign countries.

I thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his historic decisions to open up space and is also opening up the field of nuclear energy. Our goal is to make India self-reliant by 2047. I remind you that even after 1948, 1962, and 1966, the result was only 3% of total power generation, i.e., 8 gigawatts. Now we need to generate 100 gigawatts of power, so total FDI investment will have to be allowed. This Bill opens the way for everything, including security. Along with uranium, thorium is now based on domestic resources, which requires technology and investment. If technology and investment are available on our terms, there is no need to send this Bill to a Select Committee. Private investment is the need of the hour in 2025-26. Small modular reactors will be installed, and the foundation stone of the Mahi Banswara Nuclear Power Plant has been laid in Rajasthan. I conclude by saying that nuclear energy is essential not only for electricity, but also for medicine and agriculture. There is a lot of merit in the name, names are chosen thoughtfully and this Bill has also been brought as per the call of the time, hence it has been called '*Shanti Vidheyak*'.

SHRI JOSE K. MANI: I oppose this Bill not because we are against nuclear energy, but because we are against reckless privatisation of this highly-sensitive sector. This Bill opens the doors for private players to build, own and operate nuclear plants, and we have seen this Government move over and over again to privatise sensitive sectors. In every sector, the Government says privatisation is for efficiency, Ease of Doing Business and private expertise, but in reality it is the same cost, the same producers and the same beneficiaries. Today, one does not need Einstein's brain to guess the private players involved, whether it is a sea port or an airport, and I will not be surprised if a day comes when even the Army is privatised.

The Government says this Bill will transform India, but transformation should not mean transferring risk from big corporate companies to ordinary citizens. This Bill removes a very crucial safeguard. Under the 2010 law, if a nuclear accident happens due to defective equipment or faulty material, the operator had the right of recourse against the supplier. Under this Bill, the operator

remains liable, but the suppliers of nuclear equipment and fuel are completely excluded from liability. The operator pays, and when the operator's limit is exhausted, the Government pays.

I submit that whenever the Government pays compensation, it is the taxpayer who ultimately bears the burden. This approach privatizes profits while nationalizing risks, which is a matter of serious concern. I question whether this truly reflects "Make in India" or merely allows corporations to take profits while leaving liabilities with India. If suppliers are protected from liability, the incentive to ensure the highest safety and quality standards is weakened. Indian laws should not be tailored to suit foreign corporations. The Civil Liability of Nuclear Damage Act was enacted to ensure victim-centric justice, not investor comfort. While I support nuclear energy, I oppose blind privatization and lobby-driven policies. Hence, I urge that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

DR. AJEET MADHAVRAO GOPCHADE: I firmly believe that this Bill strengthens India's security and advances the nation towards becoming a global power; therefore, it should not be opposed. I observe that persistent opposition to such constructive legislation is steadily reducing the strength of the Opposition in this House, while disciplined members continue to learn and contribute till the end of the proceedings. I emphasise that this is rightly called a Peace Bill, as India is partnering with countries like Russia, the United States, and Japan on major nuclear projects such as Kudankulam and Jaitapur, which are among the world's largest reactors. Through this, India is assuming leadership in global peace and development, reflecting the ideals of Lord Gautam Buddha. This Bill conveys a message of peace, not destruction, to the world under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

As a student of medical science, I also highlight that nuclear energy plays a vital role in cancer care, PET scans, radioisotopes, and radiopharmaceuticals, thereby strengthening our healthcare system. The Government's initiative to establish functional cancer care centres in government hospitals and medical colleges is a major public service. This legislation ensures reliable base-load power, reduces dependence on coal, supports renewable energy, and helps India meet its climate commitments. With the vision of achieving 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047, this Peace Bill is not merely a policy choice but a strategic necessity for national security, public service, and lasting peace.

The NDA government has propelled this country forward by doubling its nuclear capacity. We have added 21 new reactors. I am pleased to state that we have increased the budgetary allocation from ₹9,800 crore to over ₹24,000 crore. This is our achievement. The Shanti Bill will lead India towards global leadership in next-generation technologies, including small modular reactors. It will also provide safe, affordable, and readily available energy to the industrial sector. Russia, France, the USA, and Japan are collaborating with us. This is a balanced and far-sighted model for national security, clean energy and a self-reliant India. This bill is a decisive step towards making India not only energy-rich but also a strategically strong and environmentally responsible nation. It will bring about a revolutionary transformation through controlled private participation. India will become the third-largest power producer in the world.

SHRI HARIS BEERAN: Although they call it SHANTI, what is actually happening is that the contents of this 57-page document actually declare a war on the sovereignty and financial security of Indian people. This legislation is being passed, privatizing the nuclear energy sector while dismantling the liability framework. This Bill actually attacks the right to life by substituting this absolute liability clause. How can the operator's liability be limited. There has to be an absolute liability for the operator. There is a fundamental flaw. It removes the jurisdiction of civil court entirely forcing victims to go to a Bureaucratic Claims Commission. This Clause 16 has to be rewritten to reinstate the mandatory right of recourse against the suppliers for equipment defects. Second, the liability cap in Clause 13 must be completely removed to align with the legislation about the absolute liability Clause. A strict federal consent mechanism must be inserted into the licensing framework. Clause 8 related to the the bar on civil court jurisdiction, has to be removed. The specific liability cap must be replaced with unlimited liabilities so that our citizens are protected.

DR. BHIM SINGH: This is a far-sighted bill. Once the bill is passed and becomes law, India will be able to meet most of its energy needs from non-fossil fuels. Our Prime Minister has

decided that we will achieve the net-zero target by 2070. To achieve this net-zero target, we need non-fossil fuels, and we can only do this by harnessing nuclear energy. Today, nuclear energy contributes only 3 percent to India's total energy mix. We need to increase this. Green hydrogen, UPI, cloud services, and other things require energy, and the demand is constantly increasing. Therefore, we need to produce more and more energy, and this is only possible through nuclear energy. It has been decided that we will generate 100 gigawatts of energy by 2047. For this, we will need to install a large number of small modular reactors. This will require capital. That is why the participation of private companies is very important. It is regrettable that this bill, brought with such noble intentions, is being opposed by the opposition, especially the Congress party.

The reason for introducing this bill is that the slow progress in electricity generation is being hampered by the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the CNLD Act, 2010; that is, the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010. Therefore, this bill is repealing both these laws. Now, another objection is being raised about giving this to the private sector. When we opened up the solar and wind energy sectors to private parties, you can see that we have become a global power. If we talk about defense production, we opened the defense sector to the private sector in 2018, as a result, where previously 65 percent of military equipment was imported, today 65 percent is being manufactured domestically. The 'SHANTI' Bill, 2025 represents a historic turning point in India's energy journey. This is a document of national interest. I appeal to the House to kindly pass it unanimously.

SHRI P. P. SUNEER: The proposed SHANTI Bill seeks to allow hundred per cent privatization of nuclear power generation in India. For the first time, private companies will be permitted to build, own, operate, and decommission nuclear plants. At the same time, the Bill dilutes liability provisions and limits accountability in the event of an accident. But, nuclear power is a sector where mistakes cause irreversible damage to human life, land, water, and future generations. Even highly developed countries, with far stronger institutions and regulatory cultures, have struggled with nuclear privatization and have been forced to take back control. India is a country where regulatory corruption, political influence, and corporate lobbying are not abstract risks but lived experiences. A nuclear disaster in India would mean permanent contamination of land, displacement of thousands, loss of livelihoods, collapse of local economies, and long term public health crises. The burden would not fall on the private operator. It would fall on farmers, workers, taxpayers and future generations. Clean energy goals cannot justify weak oversight. We have to build independent regulators, transparent safety mechanisms, and uncompromising accountability in the nuclear sector, all State-led. Privatizing the nuclear sector is a gamble with the lives of our people which cannot be allowed.

SHRI BRIJ LAL: India has set a target of becoming a 'fully developed India' by 2047. To achieve this, work is underway on industrialization, clean energy, and urbanization. We have green hydrogen. We will power our vehicles with green hydrogen. Our electricity demand will double by 2040. Until now, the atomic energy produced in our country was government-centric or government agency-centric, and we lagged far behind in achieving the progress we should have made in atomic energy. And the energy we are currently producing is coal-based. This coal is also gradually depleting; it is not renewable, and we sometimes have to import coal. Hydropower is also a major source, but the biggest issue is that it requires a lot of land. Solar energy is also an option. But it also requires a lot of land. Nuclear energy provides 24x7 carbon-free electricity, uses minimal land, offers long-term price stability, and will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Our target of 100 Gigawatts of electricity production requires huge capital, which is why the 'SHANTI BILL, 2025' provides an option for private players. The nuclear energy that is generated these days involves fission. In fission, we use Uranium-235 and Plutonium-239. The sun generates clean energy through fusion. We have 25 percent of the world's Thorium reserves. We will generate thorium-based energy from Uranium-235 and Plutonium-239, and ultimately our target will be to generate huge amounts of energy through the fusion system, and only then will we be able to achieve our target of 100 Gigawatts by 2047. This scheme also includes India's plan to build Small Modular Reactors. Approximately 230 to 250 reactors will be built, and these will be used in remote areas. They will be used in areas where there is no electricity. They will be installed in factories and in our data centers. We have 25% of the world's monazite sands, which are found on the coastlines of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha. Research is underway on these, and we are bringing in private entrepreneurs to

acquire that technology. Our goal is that when this happens, there will be zero carbon emissions by 2070. With these words I stand in support of this bill.

SHRI MASTHAN RAO YADAV BEEDHA: The Sustainable Harnessing and advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025, the SHANTI Bill, is a landmark legislation that reflects India's growing confidence as a responsible nuclear power and a nation committed to clean, reliable and sovereign energy solutions. This Bill marks a significant transition by consolidating the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 into a modern, unified legal framework. The intent to enable private participation, strengthen the regulatory architecture through a statutory Atomic Energy Regulatory Board and align India with international nuclear conventions is both timely and commendable. Unlike intermittent sources, nuclear power provides long duration baseload electricity, supports grid stability, and contributes meaningfully to decarbonisation. At present, nuclear power contributes less than two per cent of India's total electricity generation, which clearly underscores both the scale of the challenge and the opportunity before us. Globally, advanced economies are reaffirming nuclear power as a core pillar of their clean energy transitions. For India, expanding nuclear capacity, from the current level of about 7 GW towards the long term vision of 100 GW by 2047 is not merely an energy choice, but a strategic necessity for economic growth, industrial competitiveness and climate resilience. As we translate this strong legislative framework into sustained outcomes on the ground, the availability of skilled human capital and applied research capacity will be critical. India's nuclear ecosystem today directly employs several tens of thousands of highly specialised professionals. I request the Government to consider the establishment of National Nuclear Science University in Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh offers a highly suitable ecosystem for such an institution. It has strong base of science and engineering education. It has large pool of young technical talent and emerging industrial corridors supported by port-led development. The SHANTI Bill represents a thoughtful and forward-looking step in India's nuclear energy.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY; THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES; THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE; THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS; THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY; AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE (DR. JITENDRA SINGH), replying to the debate, said: I thank all the hon. Members who have given their valuable inputs. I am sure we will be able to take the best out of this. A lot much has already been said about the Bill. I will just like to clarify certain aspects which have come up. It is a very voluminous Bill. We have revisited three provisions. We created one voluminous manual. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board is now being given a statutory status. It is being made a part of the parent Act. Let me start on a positive note. It has been said that the views of the others and all stakeholders should also be taken into consideration while framing rules. This Bill has taken about one year or more than that. A very serious and series of consultations have taken place at different levels. All sections of stakeholders were consulted and that process is continuing. It forms a part of a larger ecosystem including some of the other components. The Nuclear Energy Mission also have a provision of small modular reactors. Rs. 20,000 crore was earmarked exclusively for that. We also recently launched a Rs. 1 lakh crore of RDI Fund, Research Development Innovation Fund to catalyze the private sector into various scientific initiations and undertakings. This Bill is slightly unorthodox in the sense. It rather suggest or seek opening up to the private partners. This was possible because of the personal intervention of Prime Minister. Before I come to the Bill *per se*, let me clarify certain things. We are dealing with a subject related to Science which concentrates more on facts, figures and evidences. Let's discuss on merits. The technology and the scenario has changed. This is the era of Artificial Intelligence. The world scenario is changing. With each passing day, the pace of change is also changing. The change is happening very dynamically. The small modular reactors are being made a part of this mission. It was never heard of. The safety concerns were also different. Now there are much better safeguards in place. There are small reactors both in the form of Bharat Small Reactors as well as Small Modular Reactors. These will be placed in residential areas, in colonies and in factory areas, etc. The outcome of various other

openings to private participation has been very rewarding. These include electricity sector, the telecom sector and very recently the Space sector. Our Space economy today is eight billion US dollars and the pace is so fast that in the next 8-10 years, we hope to go up to be 45 billion US dollars. The concept of Space startups was unheard of. Today we have over 300 Space startups. Some of them have global potentials. This was possible because private sector participation was allowed and FDI was allowed. Some of the Members raised the question of safety. safety has not been compromised in any way. The safety provisions and safety SOP are the same as they existed before. The SOP in place clearly mentions, 'safety first, production next'. During the construction of the plant, inspection is done every three months. After the plant becomes operational, it is again inspected every six months. At the completion of five years, the license is to be renewed. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, which was earlier supervising this, is now being made a statutory body. The International Atomic Energy Agency is also supervising the parameters. Now come to the seismic risk. India's plants have been located in such a manner that they are far, far away from the seismic vulnerability. Some members have also expressed apprehension of radiation causing a number of ailments, disorders and cancers, etc. The measurement of the radiation being emanating from the reactor is done in the form of a unit called micro sievert. It is far, far many times lesser than the safety limit of One millimicro sievert unit or 1000 micro sievert per year. The Government has also gone further ahead to the aspect of cyber security. Multi-level security is being upgraded. We have incorporated one new provision of Atomic Energy Redressal Commission to facilitate dispute redressal. That is for the facility of justice. One can always go to the Civil Court to the Supreme Court after that. We are now in the process of developing one Molten Salt Breeder Reactor. There was an apprehension that we would be allowing mining. It is very clearly mentioned that exploration may be allowed to the private partners. But if uranium quantity is found to be more than a certain limit, the private partners will not be allowed mining. Somebody also expressed apprehension about the spent fuel being handled by the private partners. We have an SOP in place. The spent fuel is kept in the reactor. Finally when it is taken out, it will be again in the charge of the Government authorities and not the private players. The concern of sovereignty was also expressed. We are open to adopting best practices suited to Indian conditions. We are not compromising with our own practices as well as our traditional knowledge.

I stated that allegations of "Government's crony friends" against the Government are baseless and unsupported by facts, whereas I have placed concrete evidence before the House. While acknowledging that earlier efforts had limitations, I explained that previous targets could not be achieved due to self-imposed constraints, which we are now consciously undoing. Concerns regarding environmental damage have been adequately addressed by expanding the definition of "nuclear damage" in Chapter II to explicitly include environmental harm. I clarified that certain activities may involve public participation, so critical materials such as source material, fissile material, spent fuel and heavy water will remain entirely under Government jurisdiction, with no scope for misuse. A new Redressal Commission is being introduced, and the duties and responsibilities of licensees and authorization holders have been strictly defined, including safeguards during transportation. The supplier is not given a free pass; however, as per established practice, the Government will deal only with the operator, consistent with the CLND Act, 2010.

Addressing misconceptions about liability caps, I explained that reactor liability has now been graded to encourage smaller investors and smaller or modular reactors. Smaller reactors will attract a lower liability, while ensuring that victims are never deprived of full compensation. In cases of large-scale damage, compensation will be met through the Nuclear Liability Fund and international mechanisms under the Convention on Supplementary Compensation. I highlighted significant progress in nuclear medicine, particularly in cancer treatment, as well as applications in agriculture, food preservation, research and energy security. Our nuclear energy roadmap aims to reach 100 GW by 2047, contributing nearly 10 per cent of India's total energy requirements. With emerging demands such as Artificial Intelligence, nuclear power will remain the most reliable 24x7 source of clean energy. I also underlined India's strategic advantage in Small Modular Reactors and outlined clear targets to deploy multiple small and modular reactors by 2033, strengthening energy self-reliance.

The amendments moved by Dr. V. Sivadasan, Shri A.A. Rahim, Dr. John Brittas and Shri Tiruchi Siva for reference of the Bill to a Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha were negated.

The motion for consideration of the Bill was adopted.

Clauses etc. were adopted.

The Bill was passed.

**(ii) The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin): VB-G
RAM G (विकसित भारत—जी राम जी) Bill, 2025 - as passed by Lok Sabha**

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE; AND THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN), moving the motion for consideration of the Bill, said: that the Bill to establish a rural development framework aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, by providing a statutory guarantee of one hundred and twenty-five days of wage employment in every financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work; to promote empowerment, growth, convergence and saturation for a prosperous and resilient rural Bharat; and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

Amendments for reference of the Bill to a Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha

(Shri Mohammed Nadimul Haque and Shri Tiruchi Siva moved amendments for reference of the Bill to the Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha.)

SHRI MUKUL BALKRISHNA WASNIK: We are discussing a very important Bill, which will have far-reaching consequences for millions of poor and needy people in India. Before I come to the clauses, I wish to refer to the rural employment legislation introduced in Parliament in 2004. In 2004, the National Employment Guarantee Scheme Bill was laid before the House, in the drafting of which the then Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the Chairperson of the NAC, the Hon'ble Sonia Gandhi, played a very significant role. This Bill was sent to the Standing Committee and when it finally came back before the House, on 18 August 2005, the Hon'ble Sonia Gandhi said that this Bill was prepared after extensive consultations with social workers, voluntary organisations, experienced administrators and people living in rural areas, It underwent serious consideration and a thorough public debate, and it is a living example of cooperation between society and the Government. This tookplace in 2005, the law was approved by consensus, and it benefited millions of people.

I wish to ask the Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Hon'ble the Prime Minister whether any initiative has been taken to build a consensus on this Bill, which will affect the poor, poor women and people in need? Unfortunately, this Government has not taken any such initiative, and this will have very serious consequences. When the House approved the MGNREGA, it established a universal right to work; it was a demand-driven guarantee, with a provision for 15 days work or unemployment allowance. It was a scheme that was to run all year round. There was no cap on the central allocation for this scheme, and the central government paid 100 per cent of the wages. The cost-sharing ratio was set at 90:10, and the Gram Sabha and Panchayat had a key role in selecting the works. But in today's Bill, the key role of the Panchayati Raj system has been eliminated, and the Government of India will set the priorities. On 15 December, the law was brought in without any consultation with the public, NGOs or experts, or referral to the Standing

Committee, which makes the government's intentions clear; this is not for the welfare of the people but a political weapon. The cost-sharing ratio in MNREGA used to be 90:10, but today it has been reduced to 60:40. Was any discussion held with the state Governments? They will be burdened, their financial situation will be further weakened. This is unfortunate in a federal system. The central government will determine allocations to states at the beginning of the year. If there is an epidemic, drought, famine, or flood, and people need work, the Government will say, we have decided that you will receive only this much. The burden of spending beyond this will fall on the states; the Government of India will not pay and will direct spending according to its own criteria. It will decide where, who will get work, how much, and when, and will place the burden on the states. Nothing could be more unfortunate than this.

Declaring a 60-day blackout period during the sowing or peak agricultural season would deprive women, the poor, and the needy of employment. This reflects the government's insensitivity toward the realities of rural life. Biometric attendance systems are impractical for workers whose hands have been worn down by years of hard physical labour. MGNREGA has served the country immensely, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when MGNREGA and the National Food Security Act were the only two schemes that provided relief to the people. The government has changed the name of the National Food Security Act. However, calling MGNREGA a symbol of Congress's failure is incorrect; it represents our achievements. You are attempting to remove Mahatma Gandhi's name from MGNREGA and replace it with another scheme. This reflects hostility toward Gandhi's name and his ideas. We have no objection to schemes being named after great leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, but removing Gandhi's name is unacceptable. First, MGNREGA was called useless; then it was described as a memorial of failures; thereafter, work opportunities and wages were curtailed; and now there is an attempt to erase its name altogether. This is not reform but a well-planned conspiracy. The government is urged not to pass this Bill in haste. It should be referred to a Select Committee, and adequate time should be taken to introduce fundamental improvements. If the government brings a better, worker-friendly Bill, we will fully support it and work together to uplift the poor and labourers of this country.

MS. INDU BALA GOSWAMI: I support this Bill. India is a village-centric country, and even today nearly 70 percent of its population lives in villages. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the real India resides in its villages; therefore, he envisioned Gram Swaraj, self-reliant India, a strong Panchayati Raj system, promotion of rural industries, women's education, village sanitation, village health, and holistic rural development. This Bill is an important step toward fulfilling Mahatma Gandhi's vision. It aims at the all-round development of the poor, the deprived, the oppressed, backward sections, and women, and therefore I support the government's initiative. The scheme initiated during the Congress regime aimed at poverty eradication, but Congress repeatedly changed the names of these schemes to serve its political interests. The changes in the scheme's name from 1989 to 2009 prove that Mahatma Gandhi's name was used as a shield for electoral gains. Congress forgot the true spirit of Gandhi's Gram Swaraj and, during its long tenure, neither made villages self-reliant nor eliminated poverty. MGNREGA suffered from serious deficiencies and widespread corruption—irregularities in muster rolls, fake attendance, reduction or non-payment of wages, fabrication of records by using machines instead of labour, and payments made without any work actually being carried out. Through the new Act, the Modi Government seeks to eliminate these leakages and corruption. Transparency and accountability will be ensured through mobile technology, GPS tracking, real-time digital monitoring, public disclosure of information, mandatory audits, and strict rules. The employment guarantee has been increased from 100 to 125 days, and greater participation of states in budgeting will make state governments more accountable. While the new Act guarantees 125 days of employment, this employment will not be limited to wages alone; it will focus on irrigation, afforestation, water conservation, watershed development, climate-related initiatives, and the creation of rural infrastructure. This will enhance rural production, income, livelihoods, and connectivity, and strengthen the rural economy through Panchayats. This Bill is not merely a law but a commitment to connect rural India with the goal of a developed India by 2047. Once enacted, it will set a benchmark for transparency and accountability in the journey toward a developed India. The Modi Government has never used Mahatma Gandhi's name for political gain;

instead, it has implemented his principles in practice through cleanliness, transparency, self-reliance, and corruption-free governance.

I would like to say that over the past 11 years, during the tenure of the Modi government, the landscape of the country's villages has completely transformed. There has been significant improvement in the socio-economic conditions of rural areas, and people's needs have also changed. While over 25 percent of the population was below the poverty line in 2011-12, this has decreased to 4.86 percent in 2023-24. The Modi government has lifted 25 crore people out of poverty and is providing free grains to 80 crore people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. The benefits of the Jan Dhan Yojana have reached people directly. I also want to mention that the government has modified old schemes to make them more effective. The 'Beti Bachao Yojana' was expanded into the 'Beti bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana' and linked with the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, creating a larger initiative, which changed society's mindset towards daughters and today the gender ratio has improved. In the same way, through the Swachh Bharat Mission, the country was made free from open defecation. The Indira Awas Yojana was transformed into the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, providing homes to millions of poor people in a short span of time. Today, the poor have access to housing, toilets, gas, water, electricity, ration, and healthcare facilities. I believe that if anyone has truly realized Mahatma Gandhi's dream of Gram swaraj, it is the Modi government, and the dream of a Viksit Bharat is a big step in that direction.

PROF. MANOJ KUMAR JHA: I strongly object to this bill. The states—Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Jharkhand—that struggled for years, the fundamental spirit of that struggle was to provide work to every worker and fair wages for that work. I am saddened that today the same spirit is being weakened. When I saw the Parliament passing the MGNREGA act through extensive consultation and consensus, I felt proud of the Parliament. MGNREGA was the closest to the right to work enshrined in Article 41 of the Constitution. Today I feel that no matter what the name is, the spirit of this law is being destroyed. Poor workers, landless farmers, and women are upset with the violation of their rights. We wanted reforms in MGNREGA—we were demanding an increase in man-days and wages—but the government is turning it from a right into charity. This law has been enacted without broad consultation, which is not in line with our democratic traditions. Today, MGNREGA has been turned from demand-driven to command-driven; the 60-day blackout and the 60:40 formula instead of 90:10 will weaken it. I once again urge the government to reconsider this, so that democracy and rights are not undermined.

I urge the Hon'ble Minister to reconsider the proposed matching scheme, as it will severely harm those States from where large numbers of migrant workers move to other States. The cost-sharing arrangement is highly uneven, and this approach shifts us from genuine bottom-up decentralized planning to a top-down model, which is against the interests of the country. I acknowledge the Minister's political experience and request him to listen to the voices from the ground. There is deep anger among workers, landless farmers, Dalits, and women, who feel ignored. Income inequality remains a serious concern that I have raised repeatedly in this House. Under Article 39, there is a need to tax the top 1% super-rich instead of burdening the common people.

†SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: I rise on behalf of my party, the AITC, to strongly oppose both the renaming of the Bill and the replacement of the MGNREGA Act with the VB-G RAM G Bill, 2025. Since 2005, NREGA has transformed rural India by guaranteeing livelihood security, and dismissing it as merely a “digging pits scheme” undermines its historic contribution. I draw attention to the flawed funding pattern, where any expenditure beyond the Union's allocation must be borne by the States, placing an unfair burden on them. The provision of a mandatory 60-day off period amounts to forced unemployment for those who are willing to work. Despite clear directions from the Kolkata High Court, upheld by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, MGNREGA operations in West Bengal have not been resumed and pending dues remain unpaid. Instead, nearly 50 additional conditions have been imposed on the State. In this situation, the Government of West Bengal, under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee, has stepped in through the Karmashree Scheme, providing employment and wages to around 51 lakh workers from its own resources. This reflects true respect for Gandhian values and the dignity of labour, where history is respected, not rewritten.

† Spoke in Bengali.

®SHRI R. GIRIRAJAN: I rise to oppose the VB-G RAM G Bill, 2025, which seeks to replace MGNREGA. Removing Mahatma Gandhi's name from this landmark law is unjustifiable and deeply hurts the sentiments of the people. MGNREGA uplifted nearly 15 crore people from poverty and remains the backbone of the rural economy. Changing its name and structure reflects the Government's reluctance to implement a rights-based employment guarantee. Mahatma Gandhi taught us that villages are the foundation of the nation and that rural employment is essential to prevent hunger and poverty. While increasing workdays to 125 appears beneficial, the Bill removes the legal right to work and unemployment allowance, converting an enforceable right into a discretionary scheme controlled by the Centre. This weakens federalism by imposing higher financial burdens on States without granting them autonomy. The Bill also deliberately dilutes representation by removing mandatory inclusion of women, SC, ST, OBC and minorities at the Central level. By dismantling demand-driven employment, decentralisation and accountability, it leaves only a hollow shell of the guarantee. Instead of replacing MGNREGA, the Government should have strengthened it through higher wages, climate-resilient works and at least 150 mandatory workdays. This quiet repeal without consultation undermines democratic norms and the dignity of labour.

SHRI SANJAY SINGH: I strongly oppose this Bill and caution the Government that it is repeating the historic blunder of the farm laws. Then, farmers were branded, suppressed and ignored, until the laws had to be withdrawn after immense sacrifice. Today, the same arrogance is being shown towards workers and the poor by weakening MGNREGA and replacing it with a discretionary scheme. By hiding behind the name of Lord Ram, the Government is attempting to cover injustice with symbolism. But Ram represents dignity, morality and compassion for the weakest. Shifting the funding burden to debt-ridden States, reducing Central responsibility and retaining the power to decide areas and beneficiaries clearly shows an intent to dismantle the scheme. Workers are already denied even the guaranteed 100 days of employment due to inadequate budgeting. This Bill will deepen rural distress. Bringing such a law without consultation or scrutiny by the Standing Committee undermines parliamentary democracy. If this injustice continues, workers, farmers and common people will rise together and give a powerful democratic response.

SHRI S. NIRANJAN REDDY: I believe this Bill has far-reaching consequences and requires deeper introspection. While MGNREGA had shortcomings such as leakages and false claims, many of these were being addressed through administrative reforms like geo-tagging. The Government's decision to replace it with an entirely new framework needs wider consultation. My concern is that the Bill moves from a demand-driven system to a command-driven, over-bureaucratised structure. The mandatory 40 per cent financial contribution by States and the shift to normative allocations may make the scheme unworkable, especially given current fiscal stress on States. Although the Bill contains positive elements, including focus on climate resilience and an increased work period of 125 days, excessive centralisation dilutes State autonomy. Linking Gram Panchayat plans directly to a unified National Plan undermines federal diversity and the States' role in planning. Therefore, while the intent of the Bill may be constructive, I strongly recommend that it be referred to a Select Committee for broader deliberation and consensus-building.

I acknowledge the good intentions behind the Bill to correct issues in MNREGA, but I am concerned that it relies too heavily on bureaucrats and excludes elected representatives. The process should be more consultative, and therefore I recommend referring the Bill to a Select Committee so it can be improved with broader participation and become effective, inclusive legislation.

SHRI SUBHASHISH KHUNTIA: I would like to say that instead of undertaking real reforms, the Government is focusing merely on changing names, which weakens the Gandhian spirit of an historic rights-based law like MGNREGA. Increasing the number of workdays to 125 is a positive step, but it is still inadequate for extremely backward regions like KBK. The 60:40 fund-sharing formula will increase the financial burden on poorer States, while the Centre continues to retain control. This limits the role of the Gram Sabha and Panchayats. Merely changing the name of the law without addressing its existing shortcomings is not justified. In Odisha, the current wage rate is ₹265, and faster payments will be possible only if wages are credited directly to bank accounts

® Spoke in Tamil.

within 7–15 days, middlemen are completely eliminated, and social audits and transparency are strengthened. True reform means time-bound wage payments, assured fund flow, adequate workdays, and empowered Gram Sabhas. Unless these structural issues are resolved, no new name can bring real change in the lives of workers. Therefore, I urge that this Bill be referred to the Select Committee.

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI: Rural employment is a vital source of livelihood security, and any reform to this law must safeguard the interests of rural workers. I welcome the increase in guaranteed employment days from 100 to 125, which we had strongly advocated and which the Government has accepted. While supporting the Bill, I express our concern over changing the well-recognized and historically significant name of the scheme, which had strong public and emotional connect, and I say that the original name was appropriate and need not have been altered. The Government is misleading the people by promising 150 days of employment during the 2024 elections, only to reduce it to 125 days now. Rural employment fluctuates due to local conditions like droughts, floods, and economic distress, so the Government must fully support the scheme. While I support the Bill, I strongly oppose the 60:40 funding ratio and insist that the Centre bear 100 per cent of the cost, as States are already under financial stress due to GST. Even a 10 per cent share is burdensome for many States, including Eastern ones. I welcome the Bill but the scheme must retain Mahatma Gandhi's name.

SHRI RAVI CHANDRA VADDIRAJU: MGNREGA, named after Mahatma Gandhi, should retain its original name due to its historical significance and public emotional connect. I welcome the increase in guaranteed employment days from 100 to 125 and the flexibility linking work with agriculture but I am concerned that changing the funding ratio from 90:10 to 60:40 will impose a heavy financial burden on States, especially Telangana. I suggest including District Councils, supporting handloom workers, and strengthening Gram Panchayats. I urge that the Bill be referred to a Select or Joint Parliamentary Committee for detailed scrutiny and that the 90:10 funding pattern be restored to protect farmers, agricultural labourers, and rural communities.

SHRI BIKASH RANJAN BHATTACHARYYA: I oppose this Bill, as it is unconstitutional. MGNREGA was historic in recognizing the right to work as a fundamental right and empowering Panchayats through decentralization. This new Bill, however, turns it into a bureaucratic-driven scheme controlled entirely by the Centre, undermining local democracy and forcing rural people under the influence of landlords during cultivation seasons. The promise of 125 days of work is illusory, and shifting the funding burden to States will make implementation impossible. This law is regressive, disrespectful to citizens, and violates constitutional principles. I urge the Government to withdraw it and draft a better law that genuinely advances rural employment and upholds constitutional democracy.

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN: The objective of MGNREGA, started in 2005, was to provide work to rural unemployed people within the villages to prevent migration. However, the Government has now changed its name to “Viksit Bharat-Rozgar and Aajeevika ke Liye Guarantee Mission (Gramin); VB-G RAM G,” which weakens its original purpose and public connection. Government is ignoring Gandhiji's ideals. According to the recommendations of the Standing Committee, the number of workdays should have been increased from 100 to 150, and wages should be at least ₹400 per day, but currently, rural workers are getting only about 50 days of work on average, with wages ranging from ₹225–261 per day. At such low wages, no worker will be attracted to the scheme. I believe that merely changing the name without a proper review and reform of the scheme is neither practical nor justifiable. I oppose this Bill because the Centre has increased the States' share to 40%, while many States are already under financial stress. Migration from villages to cities is rising rapidly, and with the decline of cottage industries, rural workers are not getting sufficient employment. This scheme needs to be made more practical and implemented in the interest of rural communities.

SHRI CHOWDRY MOHAMMAD RAMZAN: MGNREGA, launched in 2005 by Dr. Manmohan Singh, was India's largest employment-driven scheme, providing timely livelihood and

[∞] Spoke in Telugu.

jobs to people in rural areas. During the COVID period, this scheme helped sustain rural communities. Under this scheme, every family had the right to 100 days of work. Now the Government has renamed it as “G Ramji,” and I fail to understand what shortcomings justified this name change. No consultation was held with the States. Poor States, whose economies are weak—like mine, primarily dependent on tourism and agriculture—will be severely affected. For example, the closure of Pahalgam and a national highway disrupted both tourism and agriculture, which together contribute about 22% of GDP. I oppose this Bill because the 60:40 funding burden is unbearable for poor states and goes against the interests of ordinary poor farmers and laborers. I believe this Government harbors animosity toward Gandhiji, which is why they have renamed MGNREGA as “Viksit Bharat.” Gandhiji’s name will always be honored as a symbol of freedom and nonviolence for the people of India, and it cannot be erased through administrative orders. Poor rural workers are the ones who will build a developed India, so the scheme must ensure their welfare and timely employment. Changing the name and imposing the 60:40 funding ratio without consulting the states and considering the welfare of the poor is highly unjust. I oppose this Bill because the 60:40 funding burden is unbearable for poor states and goes against the interests of ordinary poor farmers and laborers. I believe this Government harbors animosity toward Gandhiji, which is why they have renamed MGNREGA as “Viksit Bharat.” Gandhiji’s name will always be honored as a symbol of freedom and nonviolence for the people of India, and it cannot be erased through administrative orders. Poor rural workers are the ones who will build a developed India, so the scheme must ensure their welfare and timely employment. Changing the name and imposing the 60:40 funding ratio without consulting the states and considering the welfare of the poor is highly unjust.

SHRI ADITYA PRASAD: I support this Bill. As someone from a rural and agricultural background, I understand the difficulties faced by people living in villages and the significance of MGNREGA, launched in 2005, which provided local employment and helped prevent migration. In Jharkhand, I have seen that due to corruption and misuse of funds, workers did not fully benefit, and most of the work relied on machinery. The new VB-G Ram Ji scheme aims to address these issues and ensure employment increases from 100 to 125 days, directly benefiting poor farmers and laborers. I appreciate the government’s proactive steps to empower rural communities, boost morale, and strengthen livelihoods, while also observing the political opposition that resists such reforms.

I wish to state that today the structure of the nation, society, and villages is changing rapidly, but the Congress party has still not come out of its feudal, royal mindset. They cannot understand the pain of the rural poor, workers, and people who live simple lives. Because of this, villagers, workers, and farmers were mocked, and this is why the situation of a Congress-free India has emerged today. I have highlighted the shortcomings of the earlier MGNREGA system, where the absence of a clear expenditure limit led to fake attendance, delays in payments, and large-scale corruption, especially in Jharkhand. Today, the situation is such that neither workers nor vendors want to work, because under government protection, middlemen and officials are siphoning off the money. I believe that the G-RAM-G Bill, 2025 will put a check on these middlemen. With the use of technology, mobile phones, GPS, real-time monitoring, mandatory audits, and AI, transparency will increase and corruption will no longer be able to hide. I ask the opposition whether increasing employment from 100 days to 125 days, ensuring weekly payments, and bringing in digital transparency is merely a change of name. The nation is watching—workers, farmers, and the rural poor are watching—and in today’s IT era, people in villages are fully aware and informed. I wish to state that today even the people living in villages and forest areas are highly aware and well-informed, and it is because of this awareness that the country is moving forward rapidly.

SHRI RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA: I wish to state that when this law was introduced, it became very clear to me that the government holds a negative mindset towards both farmers and workers. This Act is a direct attack on the very spirit of the MGNREGA. This law weakens the rights of crores of workers, their livelihood, and their right to demand work. The data from 2023–24 clearly shows that MGNREGA is primarily a lifeline for SC, ST, and OBC communities. For the past ten years, there has been a deliberate conspiracy to gradually weaken this scheme. There has been a continuous decline in the number of households receiving work, the number of workers employed, and the average number of workdays, resulting in the loss of

employment for millions of poor people. Because of large pending dues, the actual available budget is already reduced. Under the new law, the central government has withdrawn from its responsibility of providing employment and has placed a 40 percent financial burden on the states, while continuing to decide all the rules and conditions itself. This new law is a multi-layered attack on the rights of poor workers and labourers and represents a serious conspiracy against social justice. I wish to state that despite massive collections through GST and central cesses, the states no longer have adequate funds; as a result, neither will the states be able to contribute their share, nor will crores of workers receive employment or wages, making this law a clear assault on workers' rights. I also wish to state that this new law takes away the workers' right to demand work—MGNREGA was a demand-driven law under which the government was obligated to provide work wherever a worker sought it, but now the Central Government will decide in which state, in which area, and for how many days work will be provided, thereby extinguishing the workers' fundamental right. I would like to state further that the budget has now been made subject to the discretion of the Centre; earlier there was no budgetary cap, but now it will be decided how much money each state receives, encouraging discrimination and political bias. MGNREGA provided a legal guarantee of 100 days of employment in accordance with the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution, but under the new law it has been reduced to merely a centrally sponsored scheme, effectively ending the guarantee of the right to employment. I also assert that by imposing a 60-day condition, there is a deliberate attempt to pit farmers against workers, despite the fact that sowing and harvesting seasons vary across states, and finally, I state unequivocally that by stripping panchayats of their powers and centralizing all authority, the Central Government is mounting a direct attack on Gram Swaraj and local self-governance. I want to say that how is it even possible that *PM Gati Shakti*, which is an infrastructure development program, and *MNREGA*, which is an employment generation program, can be coordinated together? It is impossible. The seventh attack is that wages are being blocked through digital technology and conditions. MNREGA had provisions for a *physical muster roll* and *social audit*, but now biometric attendance and mandatory electronic identification have been implemented, due to which 2.7 million workers have been removed from the list. For uneducated rural workers, biometric authentication, geo-tagged attendance, real-time digital dashboards, and artificial intelligence are simply impossible. This is a way to eliminate wages. This also creates uncertainty and arbitrariness in wage rates. Under the old law, wages were according to the state *minimum wage*, but the new law under Section 10 allows wages to vary in different areas. This is a serious problem for poor workers. No consultations were held for this law—neither with opposition parties, nor with non-governmental organizations, nor with workers, nor with groups. Minister, by passing this law in the dead of night, you are trying to show that workers' rights and Mahatma Gandhi's ideals are insignificant. Mahatma Gandhi considered labor as worship and the laborer as God. But you are passing this law by erasing his name and trampling on the ideals of Lord Ram. I want to say that even now, send this to the *Select Committee*, admit your mistake, and apologize to the country and to millions of workers.

¶**MS. DOLA SEN:** I want to say that removing Mahatma Gandhi's name and replacing it with *Ramji* is absolutely wrong. At least as a Hindu what I know, Ramchandra Ji was not the kind of person who would leave his kingdom for his brother, go into exile, and then want his name to replace Mahatma Gandhi's. I want to say that what was once MGNREGA, which guaranteed at least 100 days of work and income for every rural citizen, has now been replaced by this new Bill. During the Swachh Bharat campaign, even Gandhi's glasses were retained, but now his name is being removed entirely. The scheme is being downsized, and eventually, it will be abolished. Under MGNREGA, any unemployed person had the right to demand 100 days of work, and the Central Government used to pay 90% to 100% of the wages. Now, the states have to pay 40%, and even poorer regions must pay 10%, while the Central Government will allocate funds according to its own criteria. If a state cannot provide its share, work stops, democracy stops, and the poor are denied employment. The Central Government alone will decide which areas of a state will receive work and which 60 days will have no employment. This law was originally meant to protect the Right to Life and Livelihood, but now there is neither accountability nor any guarantee. Parliament cannot replace a rights-based scheme with a centrally controlled discretionary scheme. By introducing this Bill, the Union

¶ Spoke in Bengali.

Government is systematically weakening the rights of workers. Passing a Bill in the middle of the night demonstrates complete disregard for the lives of the people. Poor working citizens will wake up to find that their right to work has vanished, and they will never forget this.

“SHRI K.R.N. RAJESHKUMAR: I must tell you, this Bill is of historic importance, and it is deeply troubling that your Government removed the statue of Mahatma Gandhi from a prominent place in Parliament. Now, you are attempting to erase his name from the Rashtriya Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Yojana. I place on record that the glory of Mahatma Gandhi, who fought for the freedom of this nation, will endure as long as India exists. The existing MGNREGA guaranteed the right to employment, but the new VBG RAM G Bill makes central funding conditional, turning a legitimate right of rural agricultural labourers into a government concession. This new law ignores agricultural realities. It calculates sowing and harvesting periods in such a way that employment is denied when farmers need labour most. The claim of 125 days of work is misleading because work is not uniform across villages or during droughts. Since 2005, workdays have already been reduced from 100 to even 50 in some areas. Central funds to States like Tamil Nadu have been withheld, and under the new Bill, 40% of the cost now falls on the States while the Union Government alone decides allocations. This is a direct assault on State rights and rural labourers’ livelihoods. Earlier, Gram Sabhas determined workdays, but now the Union Government’s Gati Shakti Portal will decide everything, centralizing power under the guise of reform. I assure you, that Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has formally protested the removal of Mahatma Gandhi’s name and the erosion of State autonomy, urging the Union Government to withdraw this Bill.

SHRIMATI SULATA DEO: I want to say, sir, that what was once MGNREGA, guaranteeing 100 days of work for every rural citizen, is being replaced by this new Bill. During Swachh Bharat, Gandhi’s glasses remained, but now even his name is removed. Workdays are being reduced, and states must pay 40% while poorer regions pay 10%, with central funding decided arbitrarily. If a state cannot provide its share, work stops, democracy stops, and poor people lose employment. This law was meant to protect the Right to Life and Livelihood, but now there is no accountability or guarantee. Parliament cannot replace a right-based scheme with a discretionary centrally-controlled scheme. Changing names does not solve real problems. Farmers in Odisha sit on roads with their paddy, seeking work, yet MGNREGA fails to provide even 40–42 days. Women’s safety is also ignored—over 5,000 assaults in 17 months show that renaming schemes does not create justice. Real empowerment comes from work, protection, and genuine rights, not cosmetic renaming or symbolic projects. A state like Odisha, which faces natural calamities, is being constantly ignored. In the past 17 months, 17 examinations have been canceled, thousands of villages are deprived of internet connectivity, tribal people did not receive ration, and some even lost their lives. Changing names alone will not solve anything. The real issue is work, rights, and resources. There are no railway lines, GST dues have not been paid, and employment opportunities are lacking. Until the Centre adopts the right approach toward the states, the federal structure will be neglected, and states will not be able to progress. I strongly urge that this Bill be sent directly to the Select Committee, where all criticism and suggestions can be considered before any decision is made. Changing the name does nothing; real change must come through work and policy.

DR. M. DHANAPAL: I congratulate the Minister and the Government for presenting a Bill focused on rural livelihoods, employment security, and dignity of labour. Our party leader, welcomes the increase in guaranteed workdays from 100 to 125, though our 2021 manifesto had promised 150 days. We have requested that Mahatma Gandhi’s name be retained in the scheme. The Bill aims to reflect a developed India growing from villages and farms, yet rural India still faces employment uncertainty, seasonal migration, and underemployment.

I support the VB-G RAM G Bill as it is timely and forward-looking. It moves beyond short-term wage relief and adopts a livelihood-centric approach by integrating guaranteed work with skill development, self-employment and local enterprise creation. Its alignment with agriculture, allied activities, rural MSMEs and green livelihoods strengthens village economies from within. By

^aspoke in Tamil.

focusing on women, youth, SCs, STs, backward classes and marginal farmers, it advances social inclusion and economic justice. This is not charity, but investment in productive human capital. At the same time, I offer constructive suggestions. The Bill should define a minimum assured employment or income threshold linked to inflation and increase guaranteed work from 125 to 180 days. Skill development must be demand-driven and linked to local industries and value chains. A predictable, non-lapsable multi-year funding framework is essential. With these improvements, the Bill can restore confidence in rural India.

©DR. V. SIVADASAN: I have reached this Parliament by walking on roads built through the labour of common and poor people under the employment guarantee scheme, and therefore I understand the dignity and struggle of rural workers. Even limited income under the scheme supports households in meeting daily expenses, healthcare and education. Yet, the Government has reduced guaranteed employment from 100 days to 75 days and shifted financial burdens to the States, thereby weakening a historic programme initiated in Mahatma Gandhi's name. I submit that this Bill, brought in the name of Ram, symbolises cruelty towards the poor and insults the Father of the Nation. Employment is a right, not charity. This Bill destroys that guarantee, undermines rural dignity and increases distress among adivasis, dalits and women. What was enacted as a legal right during crisis is now being hollowed out.

SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P: I strongly urge that this Bill be referred to a Select Committee. It was never discussed in the All-Party Meeting, nor demanded by any State Government, including BJP-ruled States. States like Kerala are likely to incur losses running into thousands of crores, affecting welfare and development expenditure. I further submit that MGNREGA was a legally enforceable right that empowered the poor to demand work with dignity. This Bill will push people into a situation of begging for employment. With fiscal resources centralised after GST, States lack the capacity to bear this burden. The Bill is anti-federal and contrary to Gandhian principles.

SHRI GULAM ALI: I stand in support of the VB-G RAM G Bill and wish to state clearly that branding this legislation as anti-Gandhi is a misreading of both history and Gandhian philosophy. The truth is that for decades, Mahatma Gandhi's vision of village swaraj and self-reliant rural India remained confined to rhetoric. Gandhiji was a strong opponent of dependency, charity and perpetual state support. He believed that democracy and social justice could survive only when villages became economically self-reliant. Gandhiji's core emphasis was on productive and dignified labour that leads to self-reliance. Temporary wage relief or symbolic employment was never his vision. This Bill moves beyond mere wage employment and focuses on livelihood security by integrating work with skill development, asset creation and the strengthening of the local economy. It transforms the rural worker from a passive wage earner into an active participant in development. I would also like to emphasise that the principle of "learn while you earn" is deeply rooted in Gandhian self-reliance. When rural workers acquire skills and create livelihoods at the local level, they are neither dependent on the State nor forced to migrate in search of survival. This Bill promotes self-reliant villages, optimal use of local resources and sustainable rural development.

Moreover, this legislation restores the dignity of labour. Gandhiji repeatedly asserted that there is no dignity in labour unless it is productive and value-generating. This Bill advances that principle by moving away from repetitive and unproductive work towards the creation of durable assets, rural infrastructure and long-term economic capacity. For these reasons, I believe this Bill aligns more closely with Gandhian philosophy and should be viewed in that spirit.

SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH: I strongly oppose this Bill because it directly contradicts Mahatma Gandhi's core philosophy of Gram Swaraj. Under MGNREGA, employment was a demand-driven legal right. Workers had the right to demand work, receive employment within a fixed timeframe and claim unemployment allowance if work was not provided. This framework was rooted in dignity, security and rights, not charity or discretion. Through this Bill, that rights-based structure is being weakened and diluted. The financial liability of wages is being shifted from the Centre to the States, most of which are already under severe fiscal stress. This effectively erodes the

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guarantee of employment. The autonomy of Gram Sabhas and Panchayats—the very soul of Gandhian decentralisation—is being curtailed, while a top-down model driven from the Centre and policy institutions is being imposed.

Through my amendments, I have proposed restoring Mahatma Gandhi's name to the scheme, ensuring full Central funding, re-establishing genuine decentralised planning and removing provisions that allow arbitrary stoppage of work. This Bill is not only anti-labour but also anti-State, anti-federal and contrary to Gandhian philosophy. Therefore, I firmly demand that it be either withdrawn or referred to a Select Committee.

SHRIMATI PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI: On behalf of my party, I oppose this Bill because it is anti-poor, anti-farmer, anti-worker and anti-employment. It has been rushed through Parliament without adequate debate, consultation with States or engagement with stakeholders. Using the name of Lord Ram to weaken a rights-based law inspired by Mahatma Gandhi raises serious moral and political concerns. The Bill shifts a financial burden of more than ₹29,000 crore onto the States, many of which are already under severe debt stress. This additional burden will make the implementation of employment guarantees practically impossible, reducing a legal right to a hollow promise. Therefore, the Bill must be referred to a Select Committee.

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