

347 Stat. Res. re. disapproval of Cess & other Taxes on Minerals (Validation) Ordinance; and (vii) Need to build up rural telecom network in Sunderbans area, West Bengal

MARCH 31, 1992

Cess & other Taxes on Minerals (Validation) Bill 348

[English]

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL (Joynagar): Sir, the Ministry of Communications announced some time back that telephone facility will be provided in all Gram Panchayats during the Eighth Plan. The target envisioned was to give telephone connections to 100 village panchayats per day. Sunderbans in West Bengal is renowned for its unique flora and fauna and the Tiger Project. But not a single telephone has so far been installed in any of the panchayats in this area which is riverine and marshy during monsoons and becomes somewhat inaccessible. This establishes the urgency of installing telephones in that area even as a part of the rural development programme. I understand that the Central Electronics Ltd. has supplied 11,000 power systems to the DOT for use in the remote rural areas and in the current years, 10,000 more systems are slated to be provided. The Solar Photo Voltaic systems are being made use by the DOT to augment the rural telecom network,

I would urge the Central Government to build up a rural telecom network through SPV systems in the Sunderbans area also where the farmers or peasants are not rich enough to have their own telephone connections and make a start by installing telephone connections, in some of the Village Panchayats at least during the next year.

16.19 hrs.

STATUTORY RESOLUTION RE. DISAPPROVAL OF THE CESS AND OTHER TAXES ON MINERALS (VALIDATION) ORDINANCE;
AND
CESS AND OTHER TAXES ON MINERALS (VALIDATION) BILL—CONTD.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House will now take up further consideration of the motion

moved by Shri Balram Singh Yadav. Shri Sriballav Panigrahi to speak.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this Bill, as you know, is before us to replace an Ordinance i.e. Cess and Other Taxes on Minerals (validation) Bill. (Interruptions)

I rise to support this Bill which is intended to replace Cess and other Taxes on Minerals (Validation) Ordinance, 1992.

A lot has been stated in support of this Bill yesterday and the Bill has received support from all sections of the House. I need not to say much about it because your Party has also already lent support to this Bill. There is no other way out.

Sir, large sums have been collected by different mineral-producing States in the form of Cess and taxes on minerals till 4th April, 1991. The validity of some State Acts imposing Cess and taxes on minerals was challenged in different Court including the Supreme Court. Such Court, the Apex Court of the country, struck down the State Acts imposing such Cess and taxes on minerals in April last year. It is just not possible on the part of the States concerned to refund these amounts which have been collected. Prior to the promulgation of the Ordinance, it was held illegal. These so-called illegal amounts could not be refunded. The States are not in a position to do that. The irony of fate is that the States which are minerally very rich or which have abundant natural resources like mines, minerals etc. are also very backward States and poor States. For instance, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar are the States which are directly hit by these Court decisions. Of course, West Bengal is also coming indirectly. But these three States are directly hit by these Court decisions. They are not in a position to pay it back. On the other hand also, the end-users are in large numbers. It is also not possible to locate all these people and ensure that these refunds are made to them. There is no other alternative before us. But one or two points strike me. The States which were collecting the