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Title: Further discussion on resolution regarding steps for balanced and equitable development of all parts of the country moved by Shri Sarbananda Sonowal on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2005 (Resolution withdrawn).

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Now, the House will take up Item No.28--Further discussion on the Resolution moved by Shri Sarbananda Sonowal.

Shri Mani Charenamei – Not present.

Now, Shri Abdul Rashid Shaheen to speak.

SHRI ABDUL RASHID SHAHEEN (BARAMULLA): Madam, I think the Mover of the Resolution, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal must talk about it first. He has to move the Resolution.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The Resolution was moved by Mr. Sarbananda Sonowal, and we are continuing the discussion.

SHRI ABDUL RASHID SHAHEEN : Madam Chairperson, I rise to support this Resolution in its letter and spirit.

In order to quote a few points before this august House, I will very pointedly mention the imbalanced development which leads to unhappiness in the distant areas of different States of the country, and ultimately it shakes the peace of those areas. I will mention about J&K straight.

Madam, in my parliamentary constituency, Baramulla, we have certain areas closer to the Line of Actual Control, those areas are waiting for the last 58 years for development of infrastructure, and for the roads, so that they can be connected for the whole year with the rest of the world. I may talk about the Gurez Valley. We were just now discussing about tourism. That Gurez is one of the wonderful areas on this earth and can be said that this is a heaven within the heaven but for more than six months that area gets cut off because the road is not available, and the infrastructural development in those areas, in piecemeal, ultimately makes those people to wait for the support to come from the welfare State.

I do not know what will happen to those areas if the pace of development in such areas continues at this rate? Ultimately, there is unhappiness of the people and they would sometimes like to give vent to their anger. Unfortunately, occasionally it takes a violent turn.[\[MSOffice53\]](#)

**19.00 hrs.** [\[MSOffice54\]](#)

I would ask and request the Government of India to take a view about the areas of North-East, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. I will say the category States and the distant areas within these States which are egregiously poor areas and are waiting for the infrastructural development in the new era of economic development in this country which is very well-known, though we are moving faster towards the third wave of civilization. We have still the Kalahandis and other places which are waiting for development.

My point is that. Hon. Member Shri Sonowal has done a favour to these areas by moving this Resolution. I support this Resolution and I would request the Government of India that it should come out with a mechanism, with the assurance of the Constitution of India that we have a development scheme for faster development of those areas, so that they come to the level of the rest of the country.

I will mention about non-lapsable pool of resources which have been granted to the North-Eastern States. I have been asking for the last eight years that Jammu and Kashmir State, having the same season and security situation, must be included in 'non-lapsable pool of resources' after the allocation is enhanced from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. But we always get a deaf ear of the Government. We have to keep on waiting for the packages to come and then people all over the country say that this State (J&K) is a drain on our resources. I want that we should have a respectful and a stable way of development process for such areas like Jammu and Kashmir and North-East.

The constraint of season in our States – the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir – is there. We have only five months of working season at our disposal. So, the non-lapsable pool is the only answer for such areas. We have to recast and reshape the functioning of that concept also so that these States get benefit out of it.

I will not talk about the federal system which Shri Sonowal has mentioned in his Resolution. That is a very big subject. We will

try in the next Session to bring a full-fledged Motion about it under the rules of this august House so that this is discussed; because cooperative federalism for this country plays a very important role now and we have a lot many important things to speak in this regard.

I support this Resolution and the concept of strengthening of the federalism in this country as it is put in the Resolution. With these words I support this Resolution. I hope that the Government of India will take positive steps to look after the development of the distant areas of the category States so that they are put on the rails back on equality with other developed areas.

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Hon. Minister will reply now.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): Madam Chairperson, hon. Member, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal has raised a very important and critical issue with which our Government has been very much concerned, that is balanced and equitable development. Although efforts have been made through the Five-Year Plans to address the problem, imbalances in regional development continue owing to varied factors such as differences in resource endowment, historical and geographical development and availability of infrastructure facilities.

I am thankful to the hon. Members of Parliament who have so actively participated in this debate on a subject which is of crucial importance to our Government at this point of time. Hon. Members will agree with me that planning and development of an area and allocation of funds are primarily the responsibility of the State Governments concerned. The Central Government, on its part, supplements the efforts of the State Governments through weightage in the formula used for distribution of Central assistance, special area programmes and various poverty alleviation and other schemes. [\[MSOffice55\]](#)

As mentioned by hon. Member Shri B. Mahtab, the formula for distribution of Central assistance is one of the most important mechanisms to address this problem. As per this formula, 30 per cent of the total assistance is earmarked for Special Category States. The remaining 70 per cent is distributed among non-Special Category States according to a set of criteria according to which 60 per cent of this share is allocated in proportion of the population of the States as per 1971 Census, 25 percentage weightage is assigned to *per capita* income, 7.5 per cent to performance and the balance 7.5 per cent is earmarked for special problems. Out of the 25 per cent assistance allocated on the basis of *per capita* income, 20 per cent is allocated exclusively to the poorest States whose *per capita* income is below the national average. The hon. Members will, therefore, appreciate that the principles underlying the distribution of Central assistance take care of regional disparities. As mentioned by hon. Members Shri Prasanna Acharya and Dr. Karan Singh Yadav, there have been requests for modification of this formula. But you will agree with me and appreciate that in the absence of a consensus among the States, it is not possible to make any change in this area.

I would, therefore, like to clarify that the Planning Commission takes into account the requirements of various States while approving their Plans, including the State of Jammu and Kashmir about which the hon. Member spoke just now. Generally, all State Plan projects are prepared by the States themselves. The Annual Plan exercise is aimed at ensuring maximum effectiveness of the schemes and sharing opinions on the best practices and trying to find solutions to the problems which each State is facing. In fact, Planning Commission has also requested the State Governments to prepare District Plans through the involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions, keeping in view exactly the concerns which Shri Sonowal has expressed so eloquently, so that the hopes and aspirations of people living in backward areas are met.

As you are all aware, special emphasis is being laid on the development of backward areas during the Tenth Plan. The *Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana* was initiated for putting in place schemes for backward areas which would help reduce imbalances and speed up development. Under this programme, till 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2006, an amount of Rs. 950 crore had been released for the Special Plan for the KBK districts, Rs. 1,417 crore for the Special Plan for Bihar and Rs. 2,854 crore for the Backward Districts Initiative which covered 147 districts. This programme has now been replaced by the Backward Regions Grant Fund so that the Panchayati Raj Institutions from the village to the district level are involved in the planning and implementation of schemes as enshrined in our Constitution.

As pointed out by hon. Member, Shrimati Tejaswini Seeramesh, the UPA Government is trying to ensure that Panchayati Raj Institutions are involved in planning and implementation of all schemes. Hence, this change has been made in the programme for backward areas. This programme has also been expanded and now 250 districts will be covered. In addition, the Special Plan for Bihar and Special Plan for Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput, which is known as KBK districts of Orissa will also be funded under this scheme. Hon. Member, Shrimati Archana Nayak has raised the issue of fund flow to the KBK districts. I would like to clarify that the total allocation for the KBK districts is being protected. Under the RSVY in the



Tenth Plan, the KBK districts are receiving an amount of Rs. 250 crore *per annum*. The same amount will be – I emphasise 'will be' - made available to these districts under the Backward Region Grant Fund during the Eleventh Plan period.

Many of the hon. Members, including Shrimati Paramjit Kaur Gulshan, Shri Kiren Rijju and Shri W. Wangyuh Konyak, spoke about the backwardness of their areas. Our Government plans to address these problems through various flagship schemes which have been designed to address the problems of employment, poverty and gaps in physical and social infrastructure.[\[s56\]](#)

As you are aware, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) has been enacted in September, 2005. The Act guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act will be applicable to areas notified by the Central Government and will cover the whole country within five years. In the first phase, the NREGS has been launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2006. Till October, 2006, three crore fifty one lakh applications for registration had been received, and three crore eleven lakh job cards have already been issued.

In addition, there are various other programmes for rural development in operation such as the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Sampoorna Grameen, Rozgar Yojana, Indira Awaas Yojana, Drought Prone Area Programme, Desert Development Programme, Integrated Wastelands Development Programme, etc., As per the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Rural Development, Members of Parliament are members of the District Rural Development Agencies; governing bodies. In addition, Members of Parliament have a role in the vigilance and monitoring committees of the programmes of the Ministry.

Chaudhary Lal Singh ji has expressed concern regarding the primary school education. The Central Government is addressing this concern through the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* which has been initiated for universalisation of elementary education. This scheme addresses the needs of about 20 crore children in 12.31 lakh habitations, 9.73 lakh existing primary and upper primary schools and non-formal education centres, including Education Guarantee Schemes and Alternative Innovative Education Centres. The scheme is focused on decentralized, participative and consultative planning. Community ownership of the school system is the key element; and has a major role in planning, implementation and monitoring.

Let me give you a few achievements under the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. Up to March 31, 2006 a total of 1.03 lakh school buildings were constructed, 3.26 lakh additional class rooms were added, 5.87 lakh new teachers were appointed and free text books were given to over 5.02 crore school children in the country.

Further, in order to increase retention in school, the mid-day meal scheme has been universalized at the primary level targeting 12 crore children in the country. Cooked mid-day meals will now be provided in all Government and Government-aided schools and a lot of centres, particulars, *EGS/AIGS* centres, and also during summer vacations in drought affected areas.

The National Rural Health Mission (2005-2012) seeks to provide effective healthcare to rural population throughout the country with the focus on 18 States, which have weak public health indicators and/or weak infrastructure. ...*(Interruptions)* Many Members have raised a lot of issues. Is it not the duty of the Minister to reply to them. ...*(Interruptions)*

The key components of the Scheme include a female health activist in each village in the high focus States; a village health plan prepared through a local team, including the Health and Sanitation Committees of the Panchayat; strengthening of rural hospitals for effective curative care; integration of vertical Health and Family Welfare programmes for optimal utilization of funds and infrastructure and strengthening delivery of primary healthcare.

The Mission aims at effective integration of health concerns with determinants of health like sanitation, hygiene, nutrition and safe drinking water through a district plan for health.

As far as water is concerned, it is a State subject and planning, funding, execution, operation and maintenance of water resources schemes, that is Irrigation (major, medium and minor), Command Area Development, Flood Control, Water supply and Sanitation are primarily the responsibility of State Governments. The Planning Commission has devolved the powers to the States for the clearance of irrigation projects in the case of intra-State rivers. However, projects on inter-state rivers are to be cleared by the Centre to ensure that utilization is within allocations made in Tribunal Awards, inter-State agreements. The Central Government is also assisting the States in the following areas *viz* completion of major, medium and minor irrigation projects and creation of irrigation potential; restoring the water bodies directly linked to agriculture; bridging the gap between the irrigation potential created and utilized through Command Area Development and protection of flood prone areas in the country.

Further, the Centre is assisting the States for the completion of major and medium irrigation projects through the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme since 1996-97. The programme which was entirely a loan from Centre in the beginning has been

modified, as the Members are aware, and now is under the Normal Central Assistance pattern with a grant and loan component from 2004-05. About 178 projects have been included under the programme throughout the country, out of which 46 have been reported completed. An amount of Rs.19,437 crore has been released till March, 2006 to the States under this Programme.

Providing potable drinking water to all villages is one of the monitorable targets of the Tenth Plan. The NCMP has stated that providing drinking water to all sections in urban and rural areas and augmenting the availability of drinking water sources is an issue of top most priority of the UPA Government. The allocation for the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme through which the Centre is assisting the States is being continuously stepped up and for 2006-07 it is Rs.5200 crore against Rs.4050 crore in 2005-06.

Regarding the presence of fluoride in the drinking water in Nalgonda raised by Shri Suravaram Sudhakar Reddy, it is informed that under the Bharat Nirman programme, out of the 2.17 lakh habitations affected by water quality in the country, priority is being given to arsenic, fluoride and salinity affected habitations in the country.

The rural sanitation coverage in the country is about 32 per cent. To help the States to achieve rural sanitation coverage, the Centre is assisting the States through the Total Sanitation Campaign Programme. Under this, hon. Members would be very happy to know that 540 districts have been included so far for assistance. The allocation for this programme has been stepped up from Rs.700 crore in 2005-06 to Rs.800 crore in 2006-07. Villages are encouraged to attain full sanitation coverage and are given "Nirmal Gram Puraskar" awards annually.

As rightly pointed out by the hon. Members, India will shine when all the backward areas get adequate basic minimum facilities. To unlock the potential of rural India, the Government has launched a time bound business plan named Bharat Nirman to be implemented from 2005-09. [\[RS7\]](#)

The six components included under Bharat Nirman are irrigation, drinking water, electrification, roads, housing and rural telephones. Physical targets include creation of 10 million hectares of additional irrigation capacity; construction of all weather roads to every habitation with over 1000 population and above (500 in hilly and tribal areas). Our friends particularly from J&K and North-Eastern States would indeed be happy to know about this. It also includes providing electricity to the remaining 1,25,000 villages; construction of 60 lakh houses; providing drinking water to 55,067 uncovered habitations by 2009 (All habitations with failed sources and water quality problems will be covered); and connecting the remaining 66,822 villages by telephones by 2007.

The Committee on Rural Infrastructure chaired by the hon. Prime Minister is monitoring the Bharat Nirman Programme. The Committee has met thrice during the year 2005-06.

The Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana was launched in March 2005 for providing rural electricity infrastructure and household electrification in order to attain the goal of providing electricity to all households in five years as set by the National Common Minimum Programme. The other important scheme in the power sector is the Accelerated Power Development and Reform Programme which was initiated in March 2003 to accelerate distribution sector reforms. The main objectives of the programme are to reduce technical and commercial losses, bring about commercial viability in the power sector, reduce outages and interruptions and increase consumer satisfaction. A Task Force has been set up to re-structure the programme so that performance can be improved and the targets achieved. These are the things which have been achieved by the UPA Government. We should be proud about this. The whole nation should be proud about this. In addition, there are various smaller schemes for the development of non-conventional energy programmes such as the Solar. Photovoltaic Demonstration Programme, National Project on Bio-gas Development, Small Hydro Power Programme, etc.

Similarly, there are a number of schemes in other sectors such as agriculture and allied activities, industries and village and small scale industries, transport and road construction etc. to help in the development of these sectors. You will be happy to know that the outlays for the three Departments under the Ministry of Agriculture have been substantially increased - for example the outlay of the "Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has been stepped up from Rs. 2650 crore in 2004-05 to Rs. 4800 crore in 2006-07. These increases in outlays will undoubtedly provide a boost to the rural economy. Further, we have the largest Public Distribution System in the world. This covers about 400 million people below poverty line (BPL) and a large number of people above poverty line (APL), spread across all parts of the country. Food grains are given to the BPL households at less than 50 per cent of the economic cost and the APL at less than 70 per cent of the economic cost through a network of about half a million fair price shops. This is one of the biggest networks in the world.



Shri Lakshman Singh ji has raised the issue of interlinking of rivers. The National Common Minimum Programme has stated that this will be pursued in a fully consultative manner and a comprehensive assessment of the feasibility of the linking of the rivers of the country will be made starting with southbound rivers. Also linking of the sub basins of the rivers in States like Bihar will also be explored. I am sure our friends from Bihar would indeed be happy now. [R58]

The initial thrust towards the inter-linking of rivers was given by the signing of MoU on 25.08.05 for preparation of DPR of the Ken Betwa Link by the participating States of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. For the execution of other proposed links obtaining the consensus of the States is in progress. The Government of Bihar also identified some intra State links for further studies by National Water Development Agency.

As far as the Constitution is concerned, there is an elaborate distribution of Governmental powers – legislative, administrative and financial – between the Union and the States. As we all know, legislative power has been classified into three lists – Union, State and Concurrent. Normally, the executive powers of the Union and the States are co-extensive with their legislative powers. However, with respect to matters in the Concurrent List, the executive power remains with the States unless the Constitution or the Parliament, by law, expressly provides otherwise (articles 73 and 162).

The Constitution makes a distribution of the powers of taxation between the Union and the States. The fields of taxation have been enumerated either in the Union List or in the State List. There is no subject of taxation in the Concurrent List. The Constitution recognizes that the financial resources of the States may not be adequate for discharging their onerous responsibilities. It, therefore, envisages certain tax revenues raised by the Union to be shared with the States. It provides not only for their distribution between the Union and the States but also *inter se* among the States on the recommendations of the Finance Commission (articles 268 and 281). These provisions have stood the test of time and have enough flexibility for reconciling such conflicts of interests as may arise from time to time between the Union and the constituent units. Further, in keeping with its commitment in the Common Minimum Programme, Government has resolved to set up a Commission on Centre-State relations.

The hon. Members will thus agree with me that the Central Government is making all out efforts for redressing regional imbalances. You will also agree with me that the Constitution is not an obstacle in the path of development of any State or region. ...(*Interruptions*) Please do not be so impatient and listen to what the UPA Government has achieved in this short span of time.

Hon. Member Shri Kirip Chaliha has rightly said that instead of constitutional changes, emphasis should be on economic measures with a time-bound framework for implementation to ensure that different regions remain united and progress equally. The landmark 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment Acts need to be operationalised in letter and spirit so that the Panchayati Raj Institutions are empowered as per the Constitutional provisions – its planning, implementation and monitoring at the grassroots level which will help the benefits of development to reach each village. In view of the efforts made by the Government, I would request the hon. Member, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal to withdraw the Resolution.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL (DIBRUGARH): Sir, my intention of bringing forward this Resolution was to draw the attention of the Central Government and this august House for having a fresh look at the constitutional provisions. I think, keeping in view the various inequalities existing in various parts of the countries, particularly the remote areas in different States, the present constitutional provisions are not going to work and are not enough to give justice to the people living in the countryside. [R59]

So [MSOffice60], we will have to consider the present situation in the country. A sense of alienation and a sense of resentment are also developing. That is why, we should give a fresh look into the present set-up of the Constitution. We are all the time claiming that we are federal but in the real sense, there is no federalism in the country. Still the Union is the more powerful than the States. You know that economic planning has been used as an instrument of Central control. The major sources of revenue assessed continue to be monopolized by the Central Government. Instead of reducing regional disparities through planned economic development and vetted financial support, in reality, such disparities are being aggravated. Some States of the country such as Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa which are rich in mineral resources continue to be the poorest regions of the country. Unless we give a serious thought to it, balanced development is not possible in the country.

In regions like the North-East and States like Jammu and Kashmir, there are many extremist groups. Of course, the Government is taking a very positive view to have a peace dialogue with them. But how to bring back those people into the mainstream? This particular set-up is not sufficient to accommodate their grievances and demands. Unless we have a new set-

up, and federalism in the true sense, it is not possible to convince those people to come to the mainstream. That is why, I have a humble submission to make.

I have to specially mention one point here. Citizenship is a vital issue in a Federal Constitution Article II of the present Constitution which fully authorizes the Parliament to make any provision with respect to the acquisition and termination of citizen and all other matters relating to citizenship. In this regard, it is felt that a total modification of the articles dealing with citizenship is urgently necessary to accommodate dual citizenship in the Constitution in accordance with federal principles. It is also an important part to be considered.

Then, I will come to equal representation from every State to remove inequalities. If we make everybody equal, then some format must be made so that there will be equal representation of people with a sense of equality. This point has to be considered.

Then there is protection of cultural rights of genuine minorities in the States. Article 347 considers greater interest of indigenous people of Assam, the power of the President under this article in relation to the official language should be made subject to the recommendation of the State Legislature. We have many articles on this subject like article 248, article 249, article 251, article 254, article 257, article 258, article 244 A with para 21 of the Sixth Schedule, fiscal relationship between the States and the Union, articles 273, 275, 280, 280A, 352, 355, 356, 163(2) and 368. These are all important articles which have to be relooked into so that true federalism can be set up in the country.

Since the time is short, I do not want to prolong my speech. I only want to submit to the hon. Minister that we have got the State List and the Central List here which will speak out the details of our intention to bring about this particular resolution in this august House. This particular distinct piece of written submission will speak out my mind-set as to why we actually desire to have true federalism in this country. Everywhere, people are demanding that they want true federalism in the country.

[\[MSOffice61\]](#)

[\[MSOffice62\]](#)

To keep the country together, we have to remove the imbalances and minimize the differences. There are big States and there are small States. Small States feel insecure in the presence of big States. So, these differences should be minimized so that the country can move together. We have to accommodate the people's views and resentments. That is why I submit that if we could sincerely consider all these people's views, resentments and grievances, we can have balanced growth. Let India prosper together. It should not be that a part of the country prospers while the other parts feel neglected. If we do that we cannot keep India together.

Now, we have been receiving a lot of threat across the border. We are also receiving threats from different agencies. So, that is why India is still under a tremendous security problem. Unless we move together in a proper and disciplined system, it is not possible to keep one billion people together. I believe that this august House will consider all these points.

I am still a strong advocate of the concept that the Centre should keep only four subjects with it, defence, communication, external affairs and currency. Let other powers be enjoyed by the States. Let the States grow on their own. So, these are the four subjects the Centre should keep and the rest be given to the States. Let States grow up with their own available resources. Let them cultivate their own wisdom and intelligentsia.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Shri Sonowal, are you withdrawing your Resolution?

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : I sincerely request the hon. Minister to assure at least that whatever I have spoken will be taken into consideration.

SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN : Madam Chairman, through you, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Member to the fact that the Constitution of the Indian Union as it exists today is one of the best Constitution in the world. Indian Constitution has stood the test of the time to meet the challenges. I assure that there won't be any discrimination under the Indian Constitution. I hope the hon. Member will withdraw his Resolution.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : Madam Chairman, the hon. Minister should assure the House that the Government will try to put in all possible measures to strengthen the federalism in the country.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Shri Sonowal, are you withdrawing?

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : The hon. Minister should react to this.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): Madam Chairman, the thrust of the Resolution is that imbalances should be removed and steps should be taken for removal of regional imbalances. The hon. Minister has spelt out the steps that the Government has taken. Let us see how it works.

SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: The focus is on development to take care of the regional imbalances. That is why I listed all the programmes. I hope now the hon. Member would withdraw his Resolution.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is it the pleasure of the House that the Resolution moved by Shri Sarbananda Sonowal be withdrawn?

*The Resolution was, by leave, withdrawn.*

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