

TITLE

SHRI D. B. PATIL : Sir, I beg to move :

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in the Long Title, *add* at the end—

“particularly for the benefit of socially and educationally backward classes and people living in remote, rural and hilly areas.”(8)

Sir, I am proposing this amendment for the benefit of socially and educationally backward classes and people living in remote, rural and hilly areas. During the debate one of the Hon. Members expressed apprehension regarding establishment of regional centres, and the Hon. Minister in his reply has stated that regional centres will be opened wherever the students will be available in sufficient strength. In urban areas many students will be available, but in remote, rural and hilly areas, which are far away from urban areas, the number of students coming forward may not be adequate or satisfactory. By this, the already neglected areas, because of less student population, will be neglected again. I have, therefore, laid special emphasis on these areas by saying that preference should be given, while implementing the provisions of the law, to the socially and educationally backward classes and people living in remote, rural and hilly areas.

SHRI K.C. PANT : Sir, the Long Title of the Bill is :

“to establish and incorporate an open University at the national level for the introduction and promotion of the open University and distance education systems in the educational pattern of the country and for the coordination and determination of standards in such systems.”

If I accept the Hon. Member's amendment, that will narrow down the scope of the definition that is given here. Therefore, I think it is better to let it remain as wide as it can be. In the other place we have discussed this aspect; this is not the place for this.

MR. CHAIRMAN . I shall now put the amendment moved by Shri B.D. Patil to the vote of the House.

Amendment No. 8 was put and negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That the Title stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

The Title was added to the Bill.

SHRI K.C. PANT : Sir I beg to move :

“That the Bill be passed.”

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That the Bill be passed.”

The motion was adopted .

[English]

LIGHTHOUSE (AMENDMENT) BILL

18.45 hrs

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now we shall take up Lighthouse (Amendment) Bill.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI) : Sir I beg to move :

“That the Bill further to amend the Lighthouse Act, 1927, be taken into consideration.”

Sir, I do not think I need to elaborate on the main purposes of the Bill. These have been stated more or less fully in the Statement of Objects and Reasons.

Till 1927' the system of Lighthouse administration in India had been a series of local arrangements with varying methods of administration and finances. In order to consolidate and amend the law relating to the provision, maintenance and control of Lighthouses in India, the Lighthouse Act, 1927, was passed by the Indian Legislature. This Act came into force with effect from 1st April, 1929. In accordance with the

provisions of the said Act, the Lighthouses which are of benefit to general shipping are classified as "General" Lighthouses whereas those Lighthouses which are of benefit to ships proceeding to a particular port are classified as "Local" Lighthouses. The management of the "General" Lighthouses vests in the Central Government whereas the "Local" lighthouses are the responsibility of the respective maritime State Governments, Port Trusts, etc. The subject "Lighthouses" is administered by my Ministry through the Department of Lighthouses and Lightships. This Department is headed by the Director General of Lighthouses and Lightships who is also the Chief Inspector of Lighthouses and Lightship in India. For the purpose of administration of "General" Lighthouses, the coastline of India is divided into 6 Lighthouse Districts, each District being under the control of a Director of Lighthouses and Lightships and with headquarters at Jamnagar, Bombay, Cochin, Madras, Calcutta and Port Blair.

The policy of the Government as enunciated in the Lighthouse Act is that the Lighthouse service should be self-supporting and the cost of providing and maintaining "General" Lighthouses should be met out of lightdues levied on shipping. Lightdues are accordingly collected under the provisions of the Lighthouse Act from ships entering or departing from the ports in India. The present rates of lightdues are as under :-

- (a) All sea-going ships other than sailing vessels Rs. 1.50 per ton
- (b) Sailing vessels 6 paise per ton

Sub-section (1) of Section (10), as amended by Act No. 37 of 1976 empowers the Central Government to prescribe rates not exceeding 1.50 per ton at which lightdues shall be payable. The rates of lighthouses were accordingly enhanced to the above ceiling level with effect from 24.8.1978 and the present annual revenue from lightdues is of the order of Rs. 7 crores. However, due to alround increase in the cost of maintenance/operation and establishment of increased navigational aids all along the country's coastline including the far-flung islands of Lakshadweep and Andman and Nicobar Islands, the financial position of the

Department of Lighthouses and Lightships has become acute. It is, therefore, proposed to amend Section 10 (1) of the Act so that the Central Government may be enabled by notification in the Official Gazette to prescribe such rates as are necessary to provide for the purposes mentioned in Section (9) at which lightdues shall be payable. The proposed amendment also provides for every such notification issued by the Central Government to be laid before each House of Parliament and if both Houses agree in making any modification in the notification, the said notification shall have effect only in such modified form.

It is also proposed to insert a new Section 8A in the Act to ensure that no obstruction is caused in the smooth and uninterrupted functioning of Lighthouses by way of growing of tall trees, construction of buildings, etc. on the sea-ward side of Lighthouses.

For the purpose of levy of lightdues, a ship's tonnage is, according to Section 12 (1) of the Act being reckoned as under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, viz. N.R.T. (Net registered tonnage). Hence no lightdues can be levied on the additional cargo carried on the deck or in the containers carried on the deck. In view of the increasing trend in the containerisation of cargo service and carriage of containers as deck cargo, it has become necessary to make suitable provision in the Act to plug the loss of revenue due to non-realisation of lightdues in respect of such deck cargo. It is, therefore, proposed to make necessary amendment to Section 12 (1) of the Act.

The remaining amendments proposed to the Act are of procedural nature and are not of much consequence.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Motion moved :

"That the Bill further to amend the Lighthouse Act, 1927, be taken into consideration."

Shri Purna Chandra Malik may speak.

[Translation]

*SHRI PURNA CHANDRA MALIK (Durgapur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Hon.

*The speech was originally delivered in Bengali.

Minister has brought forth this Lighthouse (Amendment) Bill for the purpose of enhancing the fees on ocean going ships and other sailing vessels and also for grant of more powers to appoint suitable officers to supervise and improve the working of the lighthouses. It is proper that the fees for lighthouses should be increased keeping in view the staggering rise in prices and the inflationary pressures afloat. The existing rate of the fees is very insignificant and its benefit is being derived mostly by the foreign shipping companies and the owners of big Indian Shipping Companies. Therefore for the purpose of augmenting Govt. revenues and for offering better service facilities to the employees of the light houses, the Government is justified in raising the fees and taxes for the lighthouses.

But Sir, even the meagre fees that are chargeable at present, are not being collected properly. This is because the number of employees is quite insufficient at present. I demand that the number of light houses may be increased substantially. In the coastal areas of our country there are thousands of fishermen who go far into the sea in their small boats to catch fish for their livelihood. We have seen that for want of lighthouses many of them lose direction in rough weather and get lost in the sea without trace. Many fishermen lose their lives. In the 24-Pargana district of West Bengal, there is a place called Bakkhali in the Sunderban areas. This is a very important tourist centre on the bay of Bengal. There are some 2000 fishing boats in this area which go in the sea for fishing purposes. We get news that many of them get lost in rough weather and there is loss of life also. The same situation prevails in many other parts of the country. If more light houses are constructed then on the one hand these thousands and thousands of fishermen will be benefited and on the other hand the Government can also augment its revenue by imposing small fees on these fishing boats and other small sailing vessels in the coastal areas.

This Bill also seeks to regulate the construction of high buildings and to prevent the planting of tall trees in front of the light houses so as to prevent hazards and obstruction to the working and functioning of the light houses. This objective deserves the support of all.

I want to know whether in all the four light house districts mentioned in the Bill, adequate training facilities for the staff and modern equipment are available. It is necessary to attend to this aspect and sufficient number of employees should also be appointed to man the light houses.

I would also like to know from the Hon. Minister how many recommendations made by the Estimates Committee of Parliament with regard to light houses have been implemented so far? Particularly about the Calcutta Port, the Estimates Committee suggested that the setting up of a modernised light house workshop at Calcutta should be expedited." The Estimates Committee had made many more such useful recommendations. I would therefore like to know how many of them have been implemented. I hope the Hon. Minister will supply the facts.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, we should remember that the light houses play a very important role in our maritime trade and in the defence of our country. Therefore, we should ensure that the employees and workers of the light houses are able to improve their professional expertise constantly. This is very necessary but I regret to say that this is seldom done. The required type of people are not being recruited and the necessary modernisation of these installations have not been taken up. More and improved type of light houses are not being constructed. The Govt. should be alive to this situation.

Sir, the recent disappearance of two Indian ships have pained us very much. It was published in the newspapers and Hon. Minister is also aware that recently two ships disappeared without any trace whatsoever. Later on we saw that the owners of these ships were paid compensation. But what about the 45 sailors who were on board? Their families were depended on them. No body showed any concern for them and they were not paid any compensation. I will appeal to the Hon. Minister to enquire into this episode.

Sir, the object of this Bill is very laudable. I will request the Hon. Minister to implement the large number of recommendations made by the Estimates Committee with regard to light houses. Many of the recommendations are yet to be implemented. I

would also reiterate that a light house may be constructed at Bakkhali in 24-Pargana district of West Bengal which is an important tourist centre and where 2000 fishing boats go to the sea every day and the lives of the fishermen are endangered as they get lost in the high seas. Many more light houses should be constructed in the coastal areas all over the country and on the Indian islands in the interest of the poor fishermen and fishing community of our country. With that Sir, I conclude. Thank you.

[English]

SHRI Z. R. ANSARI : Sir, the present Bill has got very limited scope. Anyway, the Hon. Member has appreciated for the Government having come forward with this Bill to increase the activities of the light-houses and lightships which are very important for the safety of the sailing ships. He also appreciated that we are going to regulate the construction of high buildings, plantation of tall trees etc. which may prove to be hazards and may create some obstruction in the way of functioning of the light-houses.

As far as the question of having more lighthouses is concerned, it is with this purpose that we are through this Bill proposing that the Government should be empowered to increase the light dues. The present position is that we are anyhow maintaining these lighthouses and lightships with some loans and some grants. Unless we increase the light dues, and the revenue is increased, it would be difficult for us to maintain or increase our present light houses and lightships.

These lighthouses and lightships are for the facility of sailing ships and sailing vessels and the ships which go in the high seas.

As regards facilities for the fishermen, who go to the high seas with small boats, it is the responsibility of the State Governments to look after their interests, but, of course, if there are lighthouses, those lighthouses will also be beneficial to them.

The major recommendations of the Estimates Committee in May, 1951 regarding the

lighthouses have all been implemented and after the passing of this Bill, we shall be in a position to improve the working of the lighthouses.

SHRI PURNA CHANDRA MALIK : I was referring to the recommendations of the Estimates Committee of 1956-57.

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI : I have with me the report of the Estimates Committee pertaining to the year 1951. I do not have information about the 1956-57 report.

With these words, I commend the Bill for the consideration of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That the Bill further to amend the Lighthouse Act, 1927, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House will now take up clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is :

“That clauses 2 to 9 stand part of the Bill”.

The motion was adopted

Clauses 2 to 9 were added to the Bill

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI Z.A. ANSARI : I beg to move :

“That the Bill be passed”.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That the Bill be passed”

The motion was adopted

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