

LOK SABHA

SYNOPSIS OF DEBATES (Proceedings other than Questions & Answers)

Sunday, September 20, 2020 / Bhadrapada 29, 1942 (Saka)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Re: Seeking arrangements in Rajya Sabha

HON'BLE SPEAKER: I have to inform you under Rule 384 that in today's sitting the Rajya Sabha Chamber will not be a part of the Lok Sabha. I have individually urged Hon'ble Members that the House is being conducted following social distancing norms. The rules are collectively formulated in the House and become part of the process after being passed unanimously by all the Members. The matter which is to be discussed in today's situation is a serious matter for all of us. We want to discuss the matter of COVID. If you do not discuss this matter, this will not send out a good message to the country. I am well aware of your feelings. Whenever you inform me that any single Member is waiting outside, definitely, I will not run the House. I promise you this.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS; MINISTER OF COAL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI): You have

given the ruling to the House. This is the best arrangement. When the seats of the gallery above and the seats of this chamber are also filled, you can adjourn the House. A lot of Members want to discuss COVID. That is the sense of the House too.

THE FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2020

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI NITYANAND RAI) moved that the leave to be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2010.

SHRI MANISH TEWARI *opposing the motion for introduction of the Bill, said:* When this law was enacted in 1976, the strategic perspective of the world was different. Since then, the strategic perspective has changed now. It is unfortunate that in the last six years, FCRA Act has been used against individuals and organization who raise their voice against the Government. Over 19,000 FCRA permissions were cancelled in the nine years between 2010 and 2019. Howsoever, what this Amendment Bill is silent about is as to how many criminal investigations actually fructified into convictions in an appropriate court of law. I have four specific objections to this Bill. Firstly, Clause 3 of the Bill violates the

Wednesbury Principle. My second objection is that Clause 6 gives unbridled powers of harassment and persecution of the Government. My third objection is that Clause 8 increases the suspension period of an FCRA certificate from 180 days to 365 days and no valid or cogent reason has been provided for this increase. My final objection is that Clause 11 makes the process of renewal of FCRA permissions equivalent to applying for a new certificate itself. Finally, I would like to conclude by saying that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly has stated that the FCRA provisions and rules are not in conformity with international law, principles and standards. So, therefore, my request to the Government is that the FCRA provisions need to be relaxed rather than made stringent.

PROF. SOUGATA RAY: The purpose of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act was to have some control on foreign contributions, not to stop them altogether. But now this is an attempt where foreign contributions will be stopped altogether because very few people will be able to comply with the new regulations expected from this Act. Thus, the freedom of people who work in social organizations, do good work in the tribal areas and rural areas, will be prohibited or barred or hampered in accepting foreign contributions. The idea should be to deregulate and not overregulate foreign contributions so that people can receive foreign contributions and do their work honestly. If somebody does fraud, then criminal investigation can be initiated. But so far, no such criminal investigation

has proved anything against people receiving foreign contributions. So, I fully oppose the introduction of this Bill which will hamper the freedom, especially of minority groups.

SHRI ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY: Firstly, Section 12(a) of this Bill is a violation of an individual's concerns and privacy of Aadhaar data. The Supreme Court judgement delivered on 22nd September 2018 stopped the Government from setting up mandatory provision for Aadhaar as an identification document. Supreme Court said it is mandatory only for IT returns and PAN allotment. But Section 12(a) demands Aadhaar as a mandatory requirement for identification. Secondly, arbitrary and unreasonable provisions are still existing in the Bill which are contrary to the spirit of promoting foreign contribution and regressive towards democratic principle. These provisions can be used as a tool to eliminate voices of dissent which is part and parcel of democracy. And, current amendments are made in order to confer unnecessary power in the hands of Government and as a tool to suppress the opposition voices. This is the reason for my opposing the introduction of the Bill.

SHRI NITYANAND RAI *replying said:* I would like to say that whichever institutions are at work, if that institution does not function according to law and rule and deviate from their purpose, in that case, we give notices and examine them. Thereafter, if required, we take action in accordance with the law. So, where is their right being violated? Secondly, in accordance with the Supreme Court

judgment, if found necessary, we are using AADHAAR for identification. This amendment has been brought in the light of Supreme Court judgment with regard to ascertaining all the information of all the Directors of such institutions through AADHAAR. As far as renewal is concerned, we will have the right to examine the five-year activities from the renewal related provisions so as to ascertain that their activities are not anti-national. So, in this case also there should be no objection to anybody in examining the purpose for which the money is being spent or not. An Hon'ble Member was saying that this Bill would discriminate against foreign contributions. That means, he is not able to understand the activities or definition of religious institutions or he is saying in a spirit of appeasement. My point is that there is no discrimination. This Bill provides an opportunity to all religions without any discrimination. Our objective is that the institutions do not deviate from their objective while receiving foreign contributions. We want to stop the effort to disrupt internal security. As regards bank accounts, I would like to say that it also facilitates that there is no need to come to Delhi. Even if you submit your document at the local level, your account will be opened in Delhi. The institution can also open another account at its local level.

The Bill was introduced.

***MATTERS UNDER RULE 377**

- (1) **SHRI SAPTAGIRI SANKAR ULAKA** laid a statement regarding need for additional JEE, NEET entrance centres in Odisha.
- (2) **SHRI D.K. SURESH** laid a statement regarding Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Cocoon.
- (3) **SHRI D.M. KATHIR ANAND** laid a statement regarding construction of subway from Kongalamman temple to RTO road in Vellore Parliamentary Constituency.
- (4) **SHRI RAGHU RAMA KRISHNA RAJU** laid a statement regarding revision of Crop Insurance Premium.
- (5) **SHRI OM PAVAN RAJENIMBALKAR** laid a statement regarding need to grant Central Assistance to complete Krishna-Marathwada Irrigation Project 2004.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

Re: Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

* Laid on the Table as directed by the Chair/Speaker.

HON'BLE SPEAKER: Hon'ble Members, today, the Covid-19 has become a major challenge to the entire humanity. We are also facing exceptional situation due to Coronavirus. Whenever there is a crisis before the country, this House has shown the way to the country. People have great expectations from this session, which is being held in a difficult situation. I have been saying from day one that even amidst the health security threats, you Members have come to the House in large numbers and given a positive message to the entire country. Today, when we are discussing a serious subject like COVID, I urge that this discussion should be positive and constructive. Our only endeavor should be how we can protect our countrymen from this epidemic. With discussion and mutual coordination, we will be able to stop this infection. It is our collective effort and obligation. Both ruling party and the opposition contribute significantly to the discussion of the House. The views that come up during the discussion give direction to the Central and State Governments. Moreover, positive criticism also guides the path forward. I urge you to also give suggestions in your speech today so that a meaningful solution may come out of this discussion and we can succeed in creating a safe environment in the country. During the lockdown, I contacted several members on the phone. Members were playing an active role in helping the deprived, the poor, and the needy people, in spite of all sorts of threats, personally, and with the entire society. For that, I express my gratitude towards all the Hon'ble Members. We have freedom of expression, but I urge you that the whole House will be inspired

by your good efforts if you share the experience of your good efforts here, about the good work you have done in your field at the time of Covid-19. Since the time for discussion is limited, let us try to be brief and to the point. I believe that during the discussion on such a serious subject, in a restrained and sensitive manner, you will also cooperate with the House, and our collective efforts to prevent the infection of this epidemic of Covid-19 will also give a new direction to the country.

DR. SHASHI THAROOR *initiating said:* Yesterday, September 19th based on the data of the World Health Organization (WHO), India recorded a fresh set of 93337 cases and tragically additional deaths of 2247 making us the country with the highest number of daily cases and deaths globally. But instead of mature and pro-active governance, we have collectively witnessed a fundamental breakdown in government machinery in these past six months. My sense is that Government is not taking this threat seriously. Had this Government listened to our leader's prescient warnings and of others like him, surely, the situation could have been managed better. The present dispensation continued to delay the implementation of a national strategy to clamp down on the spread of the virus. This was first failure of this Government. Still given at that point the number of cases were comparatively low in India, there was still time for the Government to execute a well thought out and comprehensive strategy to curb the virus. Moreover, experts were all unanimous in their opinion that sufficient notice and

advance warning are critical for a successful lockdown. Above all, surely the provision of advance warning and transparent announcement is a basic courtesy that any Government should have extended to the people of our country. It is a moral responsibility, after all, of the Government to take the nation into confidence and not leave them in the dark. Even though the people of this country were given three days' notice before locking down for a mere 17 hours *Janta Curfew* on a Sunday. What followed was horrific. Riding roughshod over federalism with no pretence of consulting the State Governments, on the, on the 24th of March, the PM took to the air to announce a lockdown for 21 days from that midnight.

The creation of a Government-made disaster laid the foundations for the widespread distress and anguish . Thousands took to our bus depots and railway stations. People made desperate attempts to make it back to their respective homes. Daily cases have nearly reached a lakh, higher than any other country. The economy is in tatters having suffered a contraction far more severe than any other country. Nearly 90 per cent of the workforce is employed in the informal economy. The Chief Labour Commissioner estimated that over 26 lakh migrant workers were stranded in various parts of the country. If this sudden announcement and the distress the Government caused to our people was to arrest the spread of the virus, then I am sorry to say that the approach was utterly misguided and has completely failed. The returning migrants are now taking infection to each and every corner of the country, mostly to rural areas in districts with relatively weak public health

systems. As the virus continued to spread, the countermeasures of a lockdown persisted and this inevitably further laid low our already fragile economy. COVID rose but our economy collapsed. We have already seen the 23.9 per cent contraction in Quarter I GDP. We, in this House, have seen how many MPs have now been infected. New cases are coming in every day. We were already suffering record levels of unemployment under this Government's much ahead of the arrival of the virus, but estimates suggest that the situation has further deteriorated. I have no doubt, had the Government adopted some of these ideas and consulted with Opposition Parties, we could have been better placed to mitigate the spread of the virus. I would like to assure the young people of this country that this Parliament will stand with them and their future.

DR. (PROF.) KIRIT PREMJI BHAI SOLANKI: The people of the whole world are grappling with the Corona pandemic. I am a medical practitioner and doctor as well as Member of Parliament. I have seen so many pandemics and diseases. I think that this is an extraordinary situation. Prime Minister has taken several decisions and led the country. The main problem for us is that in our country there are more than 130 crore people. There is limitations of medical infrastructure in rural areas. Despite so many hardships, whatever the decisions were taken by our Prime Minister, the people accepted that. The people cooperated during lockdown. They had to face many difficulties, yes they followed the decisions of our leadership. I congratulate all the corona warriors,

like doctors, nurses, health workers, sanitation workers, security forces, staff managing biomedical wastes or the Asha workers. Hundreds of doctors have sacrificed their lives fighting corona. This pandemic is a war being fought in hospitals and not on borders. We are amongst first those countries that have taken a concrete decision in this direction. According to the Ministry of Finance, approximately 33 crore people have been given financial assistance of Rs. 31,235 crore through bank transfer, direct benefit transfer. A policy has been formulated by the Government of India to defeat corona virus and that is test, tracking and treatment. With these three policies we wish to eliminate corona pandemic.

The Government of India has restricted the export of medicines and medical equipments used for the treatment of Corona. The Government has taken strict measures for testing also. The extent of sensitivity of the Government towards this problem can be seen from the fact that when I requested the hon. Minister through e-mail that the asymptomatic persons should not be admitted in hospitals, the Government took immediate cognizance of the matter.

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: I would like to say that it was the careless attitude of the Central Government which brought the Corona Virus to its peak in India. I do not know why the lockdown was announced in four hours' time for the people to prepare. There was no strategic planning with the States. We had the strictest lockdown but we failed to use that opportunity. The Government let the Corona spread everywhere and then, it went with the same speed and opened up

everything. The Government claims that it gave money to people but I have not seen a single person who got the money. The companies could postpone their loans but it never happened. Then, the middle class and the poor people who depend on daily earning have been left in the lurch for six months. We cannot say when the vaccine will come. I only want to say that we should be sending a good message. People should be worried about it because Corona Virus has not disappeared yet.

SHRI KALYAN BANERJEE: In COVID-19, the West Bengal's overall situation is this. Total number of tests is 27,44,862. Total number of cases is 2,21,162. Number of active cases is 24,648. Total number of deaths is 4,298. Positivity rate is 8.9 per cent while it is 8.53 per cent for India. Discharge rate is 86.86 per cent while it is 77.93 per cent for India. Death rate is 1.94 per cent while it is 1.65 per cent for India. There are 76 laboratories. Average daily testing is 45,000. There are 92 dedicated COVID-19 hospitals. Several special initiatives have been taken. We have introduced a special insurance scheme for healthcare workers. During the period of lockdown, in total 15.4 lakh migrant labourers came to West Bengal from various States. Direct financial assistance was provided to stranded migrants. Today, I am not going to blame anyone. This is the time when we should fight together and we should recognize the contribution of each and every one. The crucial problem is money. We not getting our share of GST. Funds should be given to the States from the PM-CARES fund also.

DR. BEESETTI VENKATA SATYAVATHI: Post-lockdown, the Central Government's approach of balancing lives and livelihoods has been much appreciated. We have started to emphasis more on Indian-made goods and digital services which will help us to an extent.

The economy that was already slowing down has been affected badly due to it, and we have come to see a decline of all economic indicators like never before. The supply chains are affected; exports have declined due to the global effect of the pandemic; and the domestic demand is also much lower than normal. In this context, I have to mention about a few dynamic activities undertaken by our Chief Minister, in the State of Andhra Pradesh. As regards testing for Covid-19, today Andhra Pradesh is testing more than 72,000 people per day. The YSR Aayogyasri Scheme was launched in Andhra Pradesh under which patients with an annual income of up to Rs. Five lakh are given free Covid-19 treatment. The Andhra Pradesh State Government has planned to spend Rs. 15,337 crore for the entire State healthcare infrastructure. I am also sure that India would return to the same-as-before situation or rather better-than-before situation.

***SHRI SHRIRANG APPA BARNE:**

***SHRI RAHUL RAMESH SHEWALE:**

***DR. UMESH G. JADAV:**

* Please see Supplement

* Please see Supplement

SHRI ARVIND SAWANT: The hon. Prime Minister declared lockdown at 8 O' Clock in the night on 24th March and said the lockdown is going to start from 12 AM. Within 4 hours of this declaration people came to the streets and they were unable to decide what to do and what not to do. At the same time, they were scared of what is going to happen further. People came on the streets of Mumbai city in such a large number as would not have come even during partition between India and Pakistan. The Union Government should have focussed on providing rail services, but it failed to do so. We are fighting with such an enemy that is invisible. In such a scenario our hon. Chief Minister constructed a field hospital of 1000 beds fully equipped with ventilators and ICU beds and provided such facilities all across the state. Our state government took over even private hospitals; put restriction thereon and on their rates of treatment and placed several limitations and capping. I would like to take pride in saying that there are 3,61,083 beds in Maharashtra under the leadership of our Chief Minister. Out of these beds 2,06,827 beds are for COVID. 1,54,082 are with oxygen facility, 53,343 are for asymptomatic patients and there are 7241 ventilators. The way efforts were made towards handling the Corona virus infections in Mumbai earned global appreciation. Meanwhile the Union Government declared that it would not further provide PPE kits and ventilators to Maharashtra. On the one hand the Government is not providing the outstanding amount under GST and on the other hand talking about self-reliance. This is not a good politics.

***SHRI SUDHAKAR TUKARAM SHRANGARE:**

***SHRIMATI RAKSHA NIKHIL KHADSE:**

*** SHRIMATI RITI PATHAK:**

SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH ' LALAN': We are just trifling away time on criticizing the hon. Prime Minister, rather we should come forward with a strategy and reach a consensus on how to fight with this global pandemic. You should put forth your positive suggestions before the Government so that we may fight with Covid-19 successfully. The Union Government has done remarkable job in its bid to fight with COVID-19 all across the country. In comparison to the total population of the countr, Bihar is a highly densely populated state. As a result of the work done by the state government the number of infected persons is merely 13 thousand. 54 lakh persons have so far been tested in Bihar where recovery rate is 91.7 per cent and mortality rate is only 0.5 per cent. Now, there was flood which raised the apprehension of community spread. But the state government decided to test all the flood affected persons who deboard the boats and only then they will enter the community kitchen and in this process all those who were tested positive mere isolated. Each and every community kitchen was subjected to testing process and those who were tested positive were isolated and quarantined. This is because there was no community spread of Corona Virus and the infection rate could not go up.

* Please see Supplement

*** SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB:**

SHRI GIRISH CHANDRA: The poor and the backward section are the worst-hit under the onslaught of Covid-19. My Parliamentary Constituency Nagina and the adjoining Bijnor are reeling under huge scarcity of Oxygen. A few persons tend to fish out of the troubled water and are indulging themselves in black-marketing. Those involved in black-marketing must be dealt with strictly under the relevant laws. The hospitals must be equipped with sufficient amount of Oxygen with beds in the ICU wards. I would like to place demand before the Government to lend a serious thought to create more employment opportunities for the poor and the labourers other than the ones being provided in MNREGA and utmost efforts should be undertaken to contain the spread of this pandemic keeping in view ever rising number of Corona patients.

SHRI NAMA NAGESWARA RAO: Migrant labourers have been very much affected due to the incidence of Covid-19 and imposition of lockdown. In Telangana, a regulation has been made to contain this pandemic. Workforce engaged in health sector has been further strengthened. The requirements of private and Government hospitals have been significantly catered to. A slew of measures have been undertaken aimed at extending requisite support to the financially disempowered persons across the State. The salary of sanitation workers, doctors and nurses has been increased by ten per cent by deducting the

* Please see Supplement

salary of other Government employees of Telangana. The Central Government is obliged to lend a serious thought to the issues of employment generation as well as taking care of Gross Domestic Products going abysmally low. I would like to request the Government to roll out the Arogyashree scheme which is being implemented in Telangana since the year 2007 as this scheme offers more facilities and comprises treatment of more diseases *viz-a-viz* the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

DR. S.T. HASAN: Our nation is passing through a critical phase at this juncture as it has been fighting a two front battle, one against Corona and other at our borders. When nation fights the battle then we all have to be united. We are with our hon. Prime Minister in this fight. Till second week of March, our hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare did a good job but from third week of March onwards when unplanned lockdown was implemented, the country had to face many problems. Our migrant labourers had to walk a distance of 1500 kms bare foot and they had to sleep on the rail tracks. Why were not special trains and buses run to transport the poor to their homes? Some people communalised the Corona. I understand that we won't be able to control this pandemic till the availability of the vaccine. I would therefore request the hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare to import the Russian Vaccine till the indigenous vaccine is ready. I would also request the Government of India to create job opportunities to help the poor.

DR. AMOL RAMSING KOLHE: The Government is praising itself for higher recovery rate and low mortality rate during this pandemic, I also appreciate the Government for it. But this Government is also trying to hide the truth behind these figures because till date about 90,000 countrymen have died. Therefore, the people of this country are asking this Government as to why this Government was busy in welcoming the President of US when Corona was taking roots in our country. When it was incumbent upon this Government to spruce up the healthcare system, this Government was trying to dislodge the state governments. Today, our people are facing the consequences of it. Our migrant labourers had to walk bare foot for hundreds of kilometres. I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare as to whether or not our country has entered the community phase of this pandemic. If it is so then all the policies of this Government have failed as about 1 lakh positive cases are being reported per day. We, therefore, need to recaste our policies. There are no clear directives to the ICMR for donation of Plasma. As per the WHO, things may deteriorate in November-December yet the Government of India has stopped supply of ventilators, PPE kits, Testing kits and N-95 masks to the Government of Maharashtra. This is not fair.

SHRI RAMESH BIDHURI: At the outset, I, while paying my condolences to the family members of those who lost their near and dear ones, express my tributes to those who lost their lives. We just cannot forget the prompt response of our hon. Home Minister who despite being diabetic himself had visited LNJP

hospital to make arrangement for 20,000 beds during crisis period. This pandemic has shocked the whole humanity. I believe that India and the US cannot be compared on this count. US is three-four times bigger than India and its population density is 33 people per km while in India it is 567 people per km. The population of US is 30-32 crore while that of India is 132-133 crore. The WHO had announced to nominate our hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare on 22nd May, as acting chairman of the WHO. The WHO might have felt that only India under the dynamic stewardship of our hon. Prime Minister could pave the way for the whole world to control this pandemic. When Corona warriors were being stoned, they were being demoralised, nurses were being harassed then our hon. Prime Minister had called 130 crore countrymen to boost the morale of our Corona warriors by way of clapping and clanging the plates. One hon. colleague was stating that there is no authentic data of the deaths of Corona warriors. He perhaps forgot the announcement of our hon. PM that the family members of the Corona warriors will be given Rs. 50 lakh in case of death of Corona warrior. Today, we have about 1059 testing labs, 1055 Covid dedicated hospitals, 1.77 lakhs beds and 23,168 ICU beds in the country. Today, our country manufactures 50,000 ventilators. Our recovery rate is over 78 per cent. Our Government brought back about 14 lakh people from abroad through Vande Matram Flights and plied about 44 thousand Vande Matram Trains to transport about 80 lakh people to their

homes. Rs. 1000 has been deposited in the Jan Dhan accounts of poor people through DBT.

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SNEHLATA SHRIVASTAVA
Secretary General

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

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NOTE: It is the verbatim Debate of the Lok Sabha and not the Synopsis that should be considered authoritative.

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