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Lok Sabha clears Bill on NHRC constitution

Piecemeal and cosmetic, says Tharoor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019 by voice vote.

The Bill expedites the process of appointment of Chairperson and members of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and provides for, among others, including the chairpersons of the National Commission for Backward Classes, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as members of the NHRC.

In his reply in the House, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the government was sensitive to the rights of humanity and was committed to strengthening the commission.

Promises transparency

"With this Bill, every section of society has now received representation. We are a government that stands for the human rights of victims not of terrorists and perpetrators of sexual crime. The amendment will ensure transparency in the appointment of chairman and members of the commission and will help fill all the vacancies," he said.

The debate witnessed sharp exchanges between the Opposition and Treasury benches.

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, initiating the debate, said there were several gaps in the Bill, and asked



Nityanand Rai speaking in the Lok Sabha. ■PTI

the government to bring a fresh one. He said the Bill was "piecemeal and cosmetic".

Mr. Tharoor alleged that human rights were being violated in the detention tribunals in Assam over the National Register of Citizens, and said that 57 people committed suicide after failing to produce citizenship documents.

BJP MP and former Mumbai Police Commissioner Satya Pal Singh alleged that human rights activists often targeted the police and government institutions and take foreign funding. "They never speak against terrorists, they will never speak against Naxals," he said.

Mr. Singh's comments that he believed Indians were descendants of great sages (rishis), and not monkeys, drew sharp criticism.

"My ancestors are not any rishis. And I was born out of Sudras ... We are here because of the fight of social justice system," DMK leader Kanimozhi said, and urged the House to uphold scientific temperament.