

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Under clause (5) of article 356 of the Constitution, a resolution approving the continuance in force of a Presidential Proclamation issued under clause (1) of that article beyond a period of one year cannot be passed by either House of Parliament unless the two conditions specified in that clause are met. The one-year period in the case of the Proclamation made with respect to the State of Punjab is due to expire on the 10th May, 1988. In view of the continued disturbed situation in Punjab, escalation in the activities of terrorists and anti-national forces resulting in the death of innocent men, women and children and of the fact that the Punjab State Legislative Assembly had to be dissolved because of the virtual impossibility of forming a popular Government in the prevailing circumstances, the continuance in force of the said Proclamation beyond the period of one year may be necessary in Punjab. Article 356(5) of the Constitution is, therefore, proposed to be amended so as to facilitate the extension of the said Proclamation, if necessary up to a period of three years as permissible under clause (4) of that article.

The continuance of the Proclamation after the 10th May, 1988 may not, it is felt, be effective as terrorist activities had been on the increase. It may be necessary to invoke the provisions of article 352 of the Constitution to declare a partial Emergency either in the whole of the State of Punjab or in particular districts of that State. If such a situation arises, the expression "armed rebellion" included in that article as one of the grounds for declaration of Emergency (which alone could be resorted to in the case of an Internal Emergency) may not be appropriate in the prevailing situation in Punjab to declare a Proclamation in that State. It is, therefore, felt that article 352 may be suitably amended in its application to the State of Punjab to include as one of the grounds "that the integrity of India is threatened by internal disturbance in any part of the territory of India" so as to facilitate the taking of action under that article if it becomes necessary at a future date. Consequentially, articles 358 and 359 are also proposed to be amended so as to provide for the automatic suspension of article 19 of the Constitution and the issuing of an order by the President suspending the operation of any of the other provisions contained in Part III (except article 20) under article 359, if and when a Proclamation of Emergency on the ground of internal disturbance is issued in relation to the whole or any part of the State of Punjab.

As the proposed amendments are only for the purpose of curbing the terrorist activities in the State of Punjab more effectively, the powers that are proposed to be conferred by these amendments would not be resorted to for any period beyond what is absolutely necessary for achieving the aforesaid object. Accordingly, the amendments proposed in articles 352, 358 and 359 have been made to be operative only for a period of two years from the commencement of this Amendment.

The Bill seeks to achieve the aforesaid objects.

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