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'Quality of deliberation in Parliament deteriorating'

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Agartala, May 31: The quality of discussions in parliament has been deteriorating and the lawmakers' viewpoint and participation must be improved, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan said here on Tuesday.

"Quality of deliberation of parliamentarians has been deteriorating, and their viewpoint and participation must be enhanced," Mahajan said after inaugurating the two-day conference of North East Region Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (NERCPA).

She said: "To improve the ideas of the parliamentarians and for a better understanding of the contemporary issues, they can take the support of the Speaker's Research Initiative (SRI), set up on July 23 last year".

"The SRI has been looking after the strategic policy aspects of core areas and issues of India for the betterment of the people on a long-term basis. For high-quality deliberations in the legislative bodies, the SRI has also been holding numerous workshops for the lawmakers and other stake holders."

The Lok Sabha Speaker also stressed on the need for holding quality debates to strengthen people's faith in the legislative institutions. "The MPs must be trained to put their views appropriately," she said.

"Most of the times during their discussions in Parliament the MPs concentrate their views only on their constituency. In their speeches in Parliament they must reflect the entire picture of the country. They must keep in their mind that the parliamentarians are policy-makers," she added.

Mahajan said that legislators in a parliamentary democracy represent the hopes and aspirations of the people. Therefore, they need to periodically introspect their roles and responsibilities.

Highlighting various issues of northeastern states, she said that India cannot be developed without the development of the northeast region.

"The present central government is also attaching high importance for an all-round development of northeast India," Mahajan said.

"On the political spectrum, northeastern states have two dynamic and experienced chief ministers — Tripura's Manik Sarkar and Sikkim's Pawan Kumar Chamling. Recently, a young and dynamic leader has taken charge as Assam's Chief Minister (Sarbananda Sonowal). You have dynamic leaders in the northeast and have dynamic young generation," she added.

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... that the leaders from the northeast with their energy, experience, vision and sense of purpose will write a glorious chapter in the development of the region".
"The northeast is considered as a place of sanctity and the most auspicious direction where most powerful, positive and progressive energies are generated. So peace, harmony and development in the region are very important," Mahajan said.

"Rs30,000 crore has been earmarked for the northeastern region in the current (2016-17) Union budget and most of this would go for development of rail, road, waterways and telecom connectivity in the region," the Lok Sabha Speaker said.

"India is working with Thailand and Myanmar on a 1,400-km-long highway that would link India with South-East Asia by land, giving a boost to trade and cultural exchanges besides economic integration. The Railways Ministry is giving massive push to railway infrastructure in the northeast, and now Manipur and Mizoram are also on the broad gauge rail map," Mahajan said.

She said the northeast region is blessed with favourable gender equation, rich natural resources and high percentage of literate young rural population. "This youthful workforce can be harnessed as a national asset for nation-building," Mahajan said.

She said the northeast has been represented by 39 members in Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), and they along with the close to 500 members of state legislative assemblies and other local representatives could collectively play an important role in the socio-economic development of the region.

NERCPA is currently chaired by Meghalaya Assembly Speaker Abu Taher Mondal.

The participants in the two-day NERCPA conference include Speakers, Deputy Speakers of seven of the eight northeastern states excluding Assam, some legislators and parliamentarians, Tripura Governor, Chief Minister and Parliamentary Affairs Minister.

The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the new Assam Assembly are yet to be elected.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar said that to maintain transparencies, expenditure of elections should be met by the governments. "Use of money power during elections must be checked," he said.

Sarkar said the Representation of People Act should be amended for equitable representations of all caste, creed and religion in Parliament and legislative bodies.