

Import of Buses

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372. { **Shri Punnoose:**
Shri Vasudevan Nair:

Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Transport undertakings, viz., B.E.S.T. of Bombay and State Transports of West Bengal have placed orders for buses in the United Kingdom;

(b) if so, the number of buses ordered for each; and

(c) the amount of foreign exchange involved in these transactions?

The Minister of Industry (Shri Manubhai Shah): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Imports during 1956-57 were made against licences as follows:—

NAME	No. of Vehicles	C.I.F. Value 'Approximate' Rs (Lakh)
BLSI Bomby	125	45
State Transport Undertaking, West Bengal.	110	33

Shri Sadhan Gupta: May I know why the West Bengal Transport and the BEST have been allowed to import buses when Mercedes-Benz trucks are being manufactured in our country and are, in fact, very good trucks for the purpose of transport?

Shri Manubhai Shah: The main question relates to buses and not trucks and that is why....

Shri Sadhan Gupta: The trucks are being used as buses on many routes, after conversion into buses.

Shri Manubhai Shah: Bus bodies and chassis which the question mentions are not being manufactured and that is why they are being imported for the present.

Shri Punnoose: Is it a fact that contracts estimated at more than

£.500,000 have been entered into with U. K. firms by Indian companies? How can it be justified in the context of our foreign exchange difficulty?

Shri Manubhai Shah: Foreign exchange is being very carefully doled out to very essential requirements. Passenger bus travel is also considered an important part of the community's needs and as such the minimum requirements of every State have been gone into. We are hoping that in the next few years when the Ashok-Leyland in Madras is expected to make double-deckers and single big vehicles of 5 tons and more, practically no imports will be necessary.

Shri Heda: May I know whether only the chassis are imported or also bus bodies, because bus bodies are manufactured at more than one place in India?

Shri Manubhai Shah: Mostly chassis, but some bus bodies also for very heavy types.

Shri Gajendra Prasad Sinha: What is the present position of production of trucks in India, and what is the present demand?

Shri Manubhai Shah: The present production is about 14,000 trucks a year and the demand could be rated at about 22,000.

Shri V. P. Nayar: May I know whether Government are aware that bus bodies have been built for a number of years on chassis made in India at Government undertakings and that they have proved very useful? Why then do we go in for import if they could be made in India?

Shri Manubhai Shah: It is true that the bus bodies and chassis are being made in India, and that is why from an automobile production of practically nil when India became independent, now we are manufacturing over 34,000 vehicles every year. But there are a few types of buses of a very heavy nature in which production has still not commenced, and I do hope in the next few years we shall make that up.