

hydraulics and dredging should be invited to examine and report to Government regarding the Haldia port. May I know whether this recommendation has been accepted by Government, and whether any experts have been invited for the purpose?

Shri Raj Bahadur: Yes, under the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme, we have been able to secure the assistance of Dr. McDowell, an expert on hydraulic port engineering, and he has been busy with this matter.

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether there have been negotiations with a U.S. firm for a giant dredger for this purpose, and if so, whether the negotiations are by now complete?

Shri Raj Bahadur: A particular U.S. firm was, of course, contacted; in view of the special problems of the Balari bar and other bars in the Hooghly, a new type of dredger known as boom dredger was considered for that purpose. The matter is still under consideration or under negotiations.

Shri Chintamani Panigrahi: There were proposals before Government to undertake dredging operations in the eastern region in Chilka lake and in other rivers also. May I know whether additional dredgers have been secured for the purpose or whether the dredgers at Calcutta will be put into service for this purpose?

Shri Raj Bahadur: There is no proposal to put the dredgers at the port of Calcutta into service in the Chilka Lake.

Shri S. C. Samanta: May I know whether the preliminary works for setting up the Haldia port will wait till these dredgers are brought and the dredging results are found?

Shri Raj Bahadur: So far as the question of siting of the port is concerned, Haldia has been chosen as the site. But no progress can be made evidently unless and until the experts tell us after hydraulic studies, what the form or design of the port should

be. It is for that purpose that all those studies which are necessary are being made.

Coal Movement from Collieries

*538. **Shrimati Mafida Ahmed:** Will the Minister of Transport and Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have offered a suggestion to the Roads and Transport Development Association to handle the coal movement from the collieries; and

(b) if so, the response received by Government from that body?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) While inaugurating the annual meeting of the Indian Roads and Transport Development Association at Bombay on 20th September 1961, I merely drew the attention of the Association to the desirability of evolving a scheme for the transport of coal by road at economic rates from the collieries to points within a range of 200 to 300 miles or more. The Association was also requested to state whether it could take steps to facilitate the movement of coal by road to places beyond Mughalsarai.

(b) The reactions of the Association in the matter have not so far been communicated to Government.

Shrimati Mafida Ahmed: May I know whether the truck position is quite favourable for solving the problem of transport of coal and whether Government consider it to be an effective measure to meet the present situation?

Shri Raj Bahadur: The main problem so far as transport of coal by road is concerned, is one of economic operation. The cost of transport of coal by road is definitely very high. So, unless and until the operators find it convenient and economic for themselves, not much encouraging results can follow.

Shri Hem Barua: In view of the fact that the hon. Minister has just now said that the cost of transport of coal by road is very high, may I know whether Government propose to remove the vexatious restrictions on inter-State movement of vehicles, as also to lower the taxes on road transport, in order to facilitate coal movement by road?

Shri Raj Bahadur: The cost of transport by road can be brought down only by permitting higher weight on the roads, that is, by permitting a higher laden weight or a higher permissible load for the vehicles. That is possible only if larger trucks are allowed and larger truck-trailer combinations are allowed. For that, we require stronger bridges, stronger culverts and stronger road surfaces, which, in the ultimate analysis, mean larger investments on road. Unless funds are available, therefore, how can we cut down the cost?

Shri Hem Barua: My question has not been replied to.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister has answered it indirectly. He says that tax incidence is not the one which stands in the way, but it is a question of want of stronger culverts and bridges and so on.

Shri Hem Barua: If the culverts etc. are made, may I know whether Government propose to lower the heavy taxes?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member's point does not seem to be what the hon. Minister has in mind. He wants to know how far the traffic that goes on the culverts, bridges etc. is being prevented from carrying higher loads, on account of the heavy taxation involved, and whether there is any proposal to reduce the taxation and make inter-State movement easier. That is the question of Shri Hem Barua.

Shri Raj Bahadur: The studies that have been made go to show that even at the present level of taxation, if a higher laden weight could be allowed, then the cost of transportation could

be brought down. As a matter of fact, it has been estimated that the cost per ton mile, where it comes to 43 nP. with a laden weight of 6 tons can be brought down to 21 nP. if the permissible laden weight is 21 tons. That is the difference. That can compare very favourably even at the present rate of taxation.

Shri Nath Pai: Are we to understand that since they cannot do two, they will not do either? There is no money to have better kind of roads to carry the traffic, as he says. That is understandable. We can sympathise with his plea. Are we, therefore, to understand that since the first cannot be done, the second, which is within their competence, that is, to see that vexatious inter-State restrictions on movement, and taxation, which the industry regards as crippling, are not there, cannot also be done?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister has suggested a middle course. He says that even on the existing culverts and roads, a heavier laden weight can be plied. But the people in charge of transport do not purchase those vehicles and utilise them. Is that the point?

Shri Raj Bahadur: That is, more or less, the point. I have submitted that if the roads and bridges could carry a higher laden weight on vehicles the cost of operation could be brought down. So far as inter-state restrictions on movement are concerned, that is a matter of co-ordination with other forms of transport, namely, railways. For that, there is the Inter-State Transport Commission. The Coal Controller has also got a Transport Committee, with the Member, Transportation, of the Railway Board, as its Chairman. They are studying these problems. In fact, they are anxious to encourage road transport as best as they can, but the question is one of economics of operation, for which the operator himself is responsible.

Mr. Speaker: Such things have come to the notice of many hon. Members. We find one rate of taxation in one

State and a heavier taxation in another. There is double taxation in some places.

Shri Raj Bahadur: About that, we have taken certain steps. All States have now agreed that wherever there used to be double-point taxation, there will be single-point taxation. That particular decision is under implementation.

Mr. Speaker: All the same it is heavy.

Shri Raj Bahadur: I have not disputed that it is heavy. It is no doubt heavy. But the transport industry has been able to bear it. That is also a plea made.

Shri Nath Pai: Is it true that the taxation on vehicles in India is the heaviest in the world?

Shri Raj Bahadur: That is also alleged. I have not been able to assess really whether it is so, but by and large it appears to be correct.

Mr. Speaker: All that hon. Members want to know is whether by reduction of this taxation, there would not be a greater possibility of transporting coal.

Shri Raj Bahadur: That is evident. If taxation is reduced, the cost of transportation will also come down.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister should give some kind of satisfaction. I am not myself satisfied. Very often this question has come up. I once said that I would appoint a Committee here to co-ordinate operation between the railway authorities and coal authorities, as regards transportation. I received a letter from the hon. Minister saying that there is already a Cabinet Sub-Committee which is looking into the matter. It has been suggested that coal may be transported by road. Of course, reduction of tax always involves some kind of loss to the State. But if they are not able to transport the goods, why should there not be a reduction of taxation? We have seen that even students have begun to

strike on this score. I get a number of adjournment motions almost every-day. The other day there was an adjournment motion on the ground that students could not go to college. It was admitted that it is so, and it is being eased. How long is this to go on?

Shri Braj Raj Singh: As long as they are in power.

Mr. Speaker: It requires a comprehensive answer from the hon. Minister to know what the position is. Why not Government reduce taxation so as to ease the situation by encouraging traffic? There is no answer to that.

Shri Raj Bahadur: On road transport, there are three types of taxations. One is by the Centre, the other is by the States and the third is at the municipal level. We have tried our level best to rationalise the tax structure so far as road transport is concerned. Many steps have been taken including the one of elimination of double-point taxation. Other steps regarding consolidation of taxes, abolition of octroi etc. also are being taken. All have the same end in view, namely, to reduce the burden of taxation on road transport.

Secondly, we are also trying to improve the road surface so that a higher laden weight may be transported. All these factors can operate in bringing down the cost of operation of road transport. The intentions of Government are clear.

An Hon. Member: Are there any results?

Shri Tyagi: What about reduction in the price of diesel oil?

Mr. Speaker: We are going to another matter. Next question.

D. V. C. Project

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*539. { **Shrimati Maimoona Sultan:**
Shri Indrajit Gupta:

Will the Minister of Irrigation and Power be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Chairman of the Damodar Valley