

**National Highway 31A**

\*605. SHRIMATI DIL KUMARI BHANDARI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether National Highway 31A meets the standard prescribed for a National Highway;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps the Government contemplate to improve the condition of this Highway?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER):

(a) to (c). National Highway 31A generally meets the National Highway standards. Improvement of National Highways including NH 31A is a continuous process and is undertaken subject to availability of funds.

SHRIMATI DIL KUMARI BHANDARI: First of all, I would like to say that the Reply itself is not correct. What is the general standard. In a Highway if two vehicles are not able to pass through smoothly, do you call it meeting the National Highway standards?

The National Highway 31A is important not only because it is the lifeline of Sikkim because Sikkim is not connected by the Railways or Airways, but this Highway runs right up to the International Border with China.

It caters to the needs of the defence also. Proper attention has not been paid to this National Highway. At places, there are perennial landslides. Not only that. There are narrow stretches of roads

which are hazardous and very precarious and the movement of essential goods to Sikkim depends on other States. They have to be moved to Sikkim. The movement of vehicles is hindered and there is loss of time and material. Teesta bridge falls on this Highway. The construction of Teesta bridge was started, if I am not incorrect, in 1985 or 1986. This bridge is important not only for Sikkim but for defence needs of the country also, as I have already mentioned. But this bridge has not yet been completed. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what was the estimated cost of the Teesta bridge then and now, and how long will it take to complete the construction of the Teesta bridge to make it operational for the benefit of the entire nation.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER: Actually this question should have been referred to the Ministry of Defence because this comes under the control of the Border Roads Organisation. No doubt, the hon. Member is right that this route is a difficult route and it has lot of geological problems. It has landslides. But it is a worthy route for defence requirements, as we know it. There are ten points on this route which, as has been pinpointed by them, require constant repairs and out of the ten points, seven have been identified and we are working on it.

As for bridge Teesta, the expected time-limit for its completion is March, 1995. As per the cost, since the bridge is going to be ready in time in 1995, I do not have the figures but I can find them from the Defence Ministry and inform the hon. Member.

SHRIMATI DIL KUMARI BHANDARI: One stretch of this National Highways runs through the State capital

of Sikkim, Gangtok. Gangtok, as it is, is a small place. The road is very narrow and the footpath along the National Highway has been broken long back. It has become very dangerous for the people of Gangtok and mostly for the school-going children. It has become really dangerous for their life. I would like to know whether Government can think of giving additional funds. In fact, they have already mentioned that because of non-availability of funds, they are not able to do it. But I would like to know whether the Government can consider giving more importance to the construction of this road which runs through the Capital itself. I would like to know whether Government can consider it and, if so, how long it will take to complete the work.

**SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER:** It is subject to the availability of funds. The problem can be looked into. I can assure the hon. Member that the problems mentioned by her would be intimated to the Defence Ministry.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I will like you to ask the question. But this question relates to National Highway 31A.

**DR. MUMTAZ ANSARI:** There is one additional National Highway 31 running through Bihar, Assam, Siliguri and West Bengal. This National Highway is in bad shape and it is not even motorable. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what action would be taken to improve this road and how much amount of funds has been allocated to Bihar and what amount is going to be earmarked for it?

**SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER:** The repairs of the National Highways is an on-going process and we are always

constantly repairing the National Highways. I can inform the hon. Member that subject to the availability of funds—I am always asking for more funds for the National Highways—the repair would be taken up and the Highway improved. But presently also, wherever there is a damage to the roads, we are constantly repairing them.

This question relates, of course, to National Highway 31A which passes through West Bengal and Sikkim but not to National Highway 31.

**SHRIMATI CHANDRA PRABHA**  
**URS:** Sir, some of the National Highways need a lot of repairs. But whenever we ask for the funds to be given to a National Highway and whenever we ask for inclusion of any road—stretch as a National Highway, they always raise the point of paucity of funds. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Ministry is thinking of inviting any foreign investments or investments through any other company. For example, the Bangalore — Mangalore — Mercara National Highway is a long way where heavy traffic is there. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether this could be included and inviting investments could be thought of from any other agency or from outside also.

**SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER:** When we talk of any agency or investment from outside, privatisation would come in. The National Highways belong to the nation. The National Highways are open to everybody. These are new roads, express ways. The foreign investment is most welcome. We have already identified some of the roads, some of the bridges and by-passes which are open to foreign investment.