

MR. SPEAKER : He does not have the analysed information with him.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : The Minister has stated that because of the secret clause, the Public Undertakings Committee or any of the Committee of the House cannot enquire into the activities of the bank. We have been hearing about the secrets accounts of a bank, that is Swiss bank. But about the nationalised banks of our country, I want to know, whether this Parliament has the right to enquire about the activities of the banks or not, and if not, I would like to know whether we can think and we can amend the secret clause. I also would like to know whether the Parliament or the committee of this Parliament can enquire about the activities of the banks.

MR. SPEAKER : Probably, this is a big policy issue. The Government has to think about it and then come out with something.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : What is the attitude of the Government ?

MR. SPEAKER : Would you like to respond, Mr. Minister ?

SHRI MANMOHAN SINGH : This is a major policy question. I would respectfully submit that other opportunities will come, when these questions can be raised. But the Question Hour is not appropriate time to raise this question. *(Interruptions)*

(Translation)

SHRI KALKA DAS : Mr. speaker, Sir, He has insulted the House. He should beg pardon from the House. *(Interruptions)*

(English)

MR. SPEAKER : I will guide you on this. Please take your seats. Why are you standing there ? I have not allowed you to ask the question.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seats.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Jena, I can guide you on this. Now, the same matter, you can discuss while discussing the Finance Bill.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : In Question Hour, policy matters are not discussed. Please understand that.

(Interruptions)

(Translation)

SHRI KALKA DAS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, you are shielding the Minister. He should reply the question just now.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Kalka Das, you are crossing your limits. Please sit down.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : You must protect our interests.

MR. SPEAKER : Exactly, that is what I have done. I will guide you. Please sit down. Now, next question.

Inland water way from Kanyakumari to Ernakulam

*532. SHRI N. DENNIS : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have examined the feasibility of opening an inland water way from

Kanyakumari to Ernakulam; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b) The Central Government have conducted hydrographic survey and techno-economic feasibility studies for navigation on the West Coast Canal (Kovalam/Trivandrum-Ernakulam-Kottapuram-Kasergode). Studies revealed that the stretch South of Quilon i.e. Quilon-Kovalam and the stretch North of Kottapuram i.e. Kottapuram-Kasergode pose many problems for development of the waterway to the National Waterway standards. No feasibility study has been carried out for opening an inland waterway from Kanyakumari to Trivandrum.

SHRI N. DENNIS : The Hon. Minister has stated that no feasibility study is conducted for opening an inland water transport system between Trivandrum and Kanyakumari. Providing the inland water way between Kanyakumari and Trivandrum and from there to Ernakulam and other places would accelerate the economic and tourist activities of the south-west region of this country.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Sir, Shri Manmohan Singh has come to this side. Can this be allowed?

MR. SPEAKER : This can be allowed. I am allowing this.

SHRI RAM NAIK : This cannot be allowed; but this can be ignored.

SHRI N. DENNIS : This cheap and popular means of transport would promote trade and commerce of the poor and common people, including fishermen of the region who live there in large numbers. This project could be easily implemented by renovation and removal of the gaps that exist in some places.

May I know from the Hon. Minister whether the Government would take up this project for implementation from Kanyakumari to Trivandrum and from there to Ernakulam and other places at the earliest?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : The Government has no plans at present in this regard. We have not done any feasibility study also. Right from Trivandrum to Kanyakumari a part of the canal is shallow and narrow; at some places there is no canal; there is a construction at some places; silting is there at some other places; and at some places we don't know who owns the property. So, as far as the inland water way from Trivandrum to Kanyakumari is concerned, the Government has no proposal.

The original proposal was from Quilon to Kottapuram which is the West Coast Canal. This includes Champakara and Udyogamandal. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : If the Minister addresses the Chair, he is addressing the House. If he addresses the Member there will be reaction.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, there was an estimate costing Rs. 42.80 crores and the Bill was passed in October 1989. But it lapsed due to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. Even the former Minister Shri Unnikrishnan has approved the proposal

from Kovalam-Quilon-Kottapuram to Vadagara which was estimated to cost over Rs. 410 crores. If I were to take up the full proposal from Kasergode to Trivandrum the total cost comes to over a thousand crores of rupees and the 8th Plan has given me only Rs. 131 crores.

SHRI N. DENNIS : From the answer it is gathered that it would be stopped half way at Quilon or at some other place. I would like to point that the project would be a complete one if it is extended to Kanyakumari, the national terminal. Previously there was AVM canal between Trivandrum and Kanyakumari through which there was regular and continuous inland water service. There were some breaches occurred in some places and they were not closed. Subsequently these breaches have not been removed and renovated and therefore the inland water transport was discontinued. If these gaps are removed and renovated, a very useful inland water way can be formed between Kanyakumari and Trivandrum and from there to the north Ernakulam and other places.

May I know from the Hon. Minister whether the feasibility study would be conducted for opening inland water service between Kanyakumari and Trivandrum and from there to other places? I would also like to know whether it would be taken up as an urgent measure and whether it would be included in the 8th Plan for implementation.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : This question has been asked two or three times before because it is the concerned Hon. Member's Constituency and the State. I would just give the

information as far as the Anantha Victoria Marthandam Canal is concerned, which is called as AVM Canal. The stretch of eight kilometres from Trivandrum is partly shallow and narrow and of course it needs a lot of improvement. In the stretch between Kakkammoola to Chavadimukku, there is no canal which exists. Similarly, if you go a little further, from Karichal to Poovar, again there is no canal which exists. So, at some place there is no canal; at some place it is very shallow; at some place it was the canal which was constructed in 1860, which is mostly silted up and there is no canal which exists. Most of the people have also encroached upon that. In the stretch between Colachel Port to Nagercoil, we do not even know if the canal existed before and if the canal was there, we do not know where it was because people have encroached upon that.

I would like to inform the Hon. Member that, no doubt, if we were to have this canal, we have to improve a lot of facilities like roads etc. So, looking at the financial scenario that we have got, it is just not possible and looking at the practical feasibility also, it is not wise to have this and to carry this out.

SHRI A. CHARLES : Inland Water Way is the only project by which Kerala can be helped. The answer given by the Hon. Minister is really disappointing because for the past five years, I have been pleading for this. The stretch from South of Quilon to Kovalam poses many problems for the development of the Water Way. It was in the last day of the Eighth Lok Sabha that a Bill was passed to make Kottapuram to Quilon as Water Way. Even the Minister had agreed and

there was no problem. I have requested that the stretch between Quilon to Trivandrum also should be included in this National Water Way in the second phase and that may be implemented. The only point is that when it is declared, it should be from Kottapuram to Trivandrum. It should be from Kottapuram to Quilon as the first phase and from Quilon to Trivandrum as the second phase. The Hon. Minister then categorically stated in the House that it will be done. May I know from the hon. Minister whether that would be honoured and will be completed?

MR. SPEAKER : You may please leave the time for the Minister to reply.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, that Bill had lapsed in the last Parliament. I have already sent that for circulation for Cabinet's consideration. There is no problem as far as the stretch between Quilon to Kottapuram is concerned. As far as the stretch between Quilon to Trivandrum is concerned, it is a stretch of 78 kilometers which requires extensive modification of two tunnels which calls for Rs. 461 crores. It is highly capital intensive and economically it is not viable.

SHRI P. C. CHACKO : Sir, the Hon. Minister has made it very clear that because of the paucity of funds, the work of this Trivandrum-Kasergode Water Way is not possible. It was agreed that techno-economic survey had been completed and the previous Government had taken a decision. So, will the hon. Minister and the Government think of mobilising NRI funds for the completion of this Water Way, since in that area, lot of Non-Resident Indians are staying. I

would also like to know whether the Inland Water Way Authority will be permitted to mobilise NRI funds to expeditiously complete this project, especially in view of the fact that the cost is going up. Every year it is going up by 20 per cent. Now, it may cost Rs. 1,000 crores; but it may cost Rs. 2,000 crores by the time it is completed.

MR. SPEAKER : Please leave time to get the reply.

P. C. CHACKO : Will the hon. Minister think of mobilising funds from NRIs?

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : I will be happy if the NRIs come and invest, according to our country's rules, because I would love if this canal is completed. If the finances are made available from NRIs without any outgo, I will be very happy to say that I will consider it.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Alleged Evasion of Excise Duty by Bidi Manufacturers of Bihar

*530. SHRI VIJAY KUMAR YADAV : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Bidi manufacturers of Bihar have shifted their factories to their domestic premises in order to avoid the payment of Central Excise duty; and

(b) if so, the action proposed to be taken by the Union Government in this regard?