

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE : It is unfortunate that this is the case of my constituency. It pertains to the district of Murshidabad. The unfortunate 77 children—76 girls and one boy—belong to the different villages within my constituency. It is not an accidental case. It has become the regular feature of the racketeers. I have regards for the Haj pilgrims. There is no doubt about it. But there are some notorious people and barbarous businessmen who create temptations by offering money and the unfortunate children and their unfortunate parents fall into the trap of these temptations. They sell their children for getting some money. This business is going on for years together.

MR. SPEAKER : Put the question now, please.

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE : Yes, coming to my point, this Government has referred the matter to the West Bengal Government. The West Bengal Government have given them the primary shelter and treatment, and they have returned the children to their parents. This much was done. I have talked to the District Magistrate of Murshidabad today morning. Only three persons have been arrested in this connection. I want to know from the Government of India and especially from the External Affairs Minister what steps have been taken to arrest those guilty persons and give them exemplary punishment to stop this inhuman and barbarous activity ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : I hope my hon. friend would agree that this unfortunate incident which is a despicable incident occurred in West Bengal and naturally it falls within the purview of the West Bengal Government. They have taken steps. The inquiry is still going on. The three people or three persons whom they have apprehended is, perhaps, the first step. The police inquiry is going on. So, I think we must go by this. Whenever they come across third persons who are responsible, I am sure, the West Bengal Government will take action ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Now, we go to the next Question. Question No. 22.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : The gang is an all-India gang.

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE : It is an all-India gang. It is not a district affair ...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : It is an important question. Allow us, please ...*(Interruptions)*

#### Privatisation of National Highways Expansion Schemes

\*22. SHRI N. DENNIS :  
SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the National Highways expansion schemes are to be handed over to the private sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the guidelines set in this regard; and

(c) the method of selecting the areas of National Highways to be handed over to the Private sector for expansion ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (c) Projects relating to bypasses, bridges, road over bridges and four laning of existing sections of National Highways which on the basis of traffic density are financially viable and bankable are proposed to be taken up through private sector participation. The guidelines stipulate that the award of such works will be through open competitive bidding and the selection of the entrepreneur will be on the basis of the least cost to the user.

SHRI N. DENNIS : Sir, the National Highways play a crucial role in accelerating the economic activities and development. Sections of many National Highways are in a very bad condition. The allocation of funds to this sector is too inadequate to meet the requirements. So, private participation is allowed. Though private participation is allowed by the amendment to the National Highways Act of 1955, yet the response is not to the extent expected.

May I know from the hon. Minister, what the impediments are that stand in the way of larger participation and involvement of the private sector and the steps that would be taken to speed up the process by extending incentives, encouragements and other facilities for larger involvement and participation of the private sector ?

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, in pursuance of the initiatives, as the hon. Member has asked, I would submit that the road sector has been declared as an industry to facilitate commercial borrowings. Certain tax and fiscal concessions have been given, like tax holiday for five years and 30 per cent reduction in tax over the subsequent five years to be extended, to be availed of for any period upto 12 years. There are also facilities like reduction in import duty on equipments, incentives to financial institutions as well, creation of an Infrastructure Development Finance Company with an authorized capital of Rs. 5,000 crore, enabling the entrepreneurs to have access to cheaper funds for investment in the road sector and providing capital to NHA to allow it to generate more funds. These are the incentives given by the Government.

SHRI N. DENNIS : May I know from the hon. Minister about the follow up actions that have been taken after the amendment of the National Highways Act of 1955 and also the categories of works that are identified for entrustment to the private sector as also the details of these works and the quantum of investment made by the private sector ?

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, the details of projects that have already been awarded are :

1. Thane-Bhiwandi Bypass in Maharashtra. Its length is 24 kilometres, and the estimated cost is Rs. 17 crore. The present status is that about 60 per cent of the work has been completed.
2. Udaipur Bypass in Rajasthan. Its length is 11 kilometres and the estimated cost is Rs. 24 crore. 15 per cent of the work has been completed on this project.
3. Chalthan Road Over Bridge in Gujarat. Its estimated cost is Rs. 10 crore and five per cent work has been carried out.

The details of the bids invited and received are like this.

1. Nellore Bypass in Andhra Pradesh. Its length is 18 kilometres and the estimated cost is Rs. 70 crore. It is under negotiation.
2. Hubli-Dharwar in Karnataka. Its length is 30 kilometres and its estimated cost is Rs. 65 crore. It is also under negotiation.
3. Coimbatore Bypass in Tamil Nadu. Its length is 27 kilometres and the estimated cost is Rs. 90 crore. The response is inadequate and the negotiation is going on.
4. Second Narmada Bridge in Gujarat. The estimated cost of it is Rs. 110 crore. It is also under negotiation.
5. Second Vivekananda Bridge in West Bengal. Its estimated cost is Rs. 400 crore. Alignment and other details are under finalisation.
6. Durg Bypass including Sheonath Bridge in Madhya Pradesh. Its length is 18 kilometres and its estimated cost is Rs. 50 crore. Financial bids are yet to be received in regard to this project.
7. Pengual Bypass. Its length is 10 kilometres and the estimated cost is Rs. 350 crore. It is under consideration.
8. Patalganga Bridge in Maharashtra. Its estimated cost is Rs. 26 crore. It is under negotiation.

The details of further proposals which are in the pipeline, are like this.

1. Road Over Bridges are 24 in number and the estimated cost is Rs. 200 crore. Feasibility studies are going on.
2. Bridges on Rivers are seven in number. The estimated cost is Rs. 150 crore. Land acquisition is taking place.
3. Bypasses around congested towns. Their number is 24 and their estimated cost is Rs. 1400 crore...

MR. SPEAKER : Please, Mr. Minister, if the list is very long, kindly furnish the required information to the hon. Member separately.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Right, Sir.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the original question is relating to expansion of the National Highways. I must bring it to the notice of this House, through you, that for the last 20 years, the Government has not taken any steps for the expansion of the National Highways. Many proposals are still pending from various States and the Government of India has not taken any steps for construction of new National Highways and also for expansion of the National Highways network.

MR. SPEAKER : Please come to the question.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Sir, I am coming to the question. It is very important.

A levy was imposed on the sales of the petroleum products and a huge amount has been collected. But that money also is not spent for improvement of the National Highways.

Now, after much debate, the National Highways Act has been amended and a provision is made for private participation.

MR. SPEAKER : You must presume that everybody knows as to what you are speaking. So, put your question now.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : I am coming to that now. Though the Act has been amended about four years back, yet no concrete steps have been taken for identifying the specific work and also for entrustment of this work to private parties. I understand that the rules which would enable the Government to allow private parties to participate in the expansion of the National Highways are not yet formulated. There is a tussle between the Ministry of Surface Transport and the Finance Ministry.

MR. SPEAKER : Do you want to put the question ?

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Because ...

MR. SPEAKER : There is no 'because' here, you put the question.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Rules are not yet framed. Because of that the Government is not in a position to allow private parties to participate in the expansion of the National Highways. Is it true ? That is my question.

MR. SPEAKER : Is it true ?

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : I will answer the question. It is false.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Rules have not yet been framed, Sir. The Minister is misleading the House. You must protect me.

MR. SPEAKER : If he is misleading the House, you bring the issue of breach of privilege of the House. You can bring breach of privilege against the Minister, if he is misleading.

SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN : The total bank of sanction used to be four times of the annual allocation formerly. Now it has been reduced to 2.5 times of the annual allocation. As a result of this, the highway development in Kerala is at a standstill. The allocation to the State of Kerala has also been considerably reduced. They are not able to meet the maximum expenditure due to the new policy made by the Government of India. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he will take steps to enhance this from 2.5 times to 4 times, so that we could meet the maximum expenditure.

As a special circumstance, I would like to make a note that the land acquisition proceeding is going on in Kerala for Highways. Rs. 28 crore have remained unspent on this account. That also will come within the bank of sanction. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the land acquisition amount will be exempted from this bank of sanction and it will be enhanced to four times that of the annual allocation.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : If they do not spend whatever has been allotted to them, it comes back to the common pool. Therefore only next year we can augment the allocation.

KUMARI FRIDA TOPNO : Many big private industrial sectors are coming up in the eastern India due to its richness in mineral resources. I would like to know whether the Government have any proposal to entrust the expansion scheme of the National Highways to the private sector. If yes, which are the National Highways and the name of the business houses which are proposed to be entrusted with this job.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : A separate question is required.

MR. SPEAKER : A separate question is required. Okay, we will go to the separate question !

... (Interruptions)

SHRI RAM NAIK : You said you would allow supplementaries on this, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER : In the last Session of Parliament we had a discussion on this, a full debate on this question. You cannot go on like this.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I am sorry, Next question, Shri Prabhudayal Katheria.

[Translation]

#### Crash of I.A.F. Aircrafts

\*23. SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA :  
SHRI LALIT ORAON :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether crash of aircrafts in the IAF has become more and more frequent during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years and the losses suffered as a result thereof;

(c) whether any enquiry has been conducted to ascertain the causes of accidents;

(d) if so, the findings thereof;

(e) whether any systematic study has been undertaken by the Indian Air Force to check such crashes in the future;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether the Government also propose to set up an expert committee to find out the reasons for such crashes;

(h) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(i) the measures being taken at present to check such accidents/crashes ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI MULAYAM SINGH YADAV) : (a) to (i) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

#### Statement

Accident rate of the IAF which was about 30 per year over the previous decade, has fallen to an average of 24 aircraft per year in the current decade. The number of accidents during the last three years are as follows :

1993-94	22
1994-95	25
1995-96	27*
1996-97 (upto 20.2.97)	17*

\* Though there were 27/17 accidents, yet in a particular accident, two aircrafts were involved. So, the number of aircraft lost was 28/18.

Every accident in the IAF is investigated by a Court of Inquiry. Inquiries have revealed that the main causes of air accidents are Human Error, Technical Defects and Bird Strike. A number of studies were undertaken by the IAF and implementation of remedial measures suggested as a result of such studies has helped in bringing down the rate of accidents. An Expert Committee under the chairmanship of Scientific Advisor to Raksha Mantri has also been constituted for in-depth study of the accidents. Further, to