

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, September 10, 1996/ Bhadra 19, 1918 (Saka)

(The Lok Sabha met at Two Minutes Past Eleven of the Clock)

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

Konkan Region in Maharashtra

*521 SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY:
SHRI RAM NAIK:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal to amend the constitution to make it possible to provide for a separate Statutory Development Board for the Konkan region in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the present status of the proposal; and

(c) the time by which a separate Statutory Development Board for Konkan region would be provided?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA) : (a) Yes, Sir. There is such a proposal from the State Government

(b) and (c) The Union Government is interacting with the Government of Maharashtra on the proposal. As there are various legal and Constitutional complexities involved in the issue, it would not be possible to lay down a definite time-frame for resolving the issue.

[*Translation*]

SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the demand for constituting a separate Statutory Development Board for the Konkan region is not new. On March 13, 1989, both the Houses of Maharashtra had demanded setting up of a separate Statutory Development Board for Konkan. Separate Boards have been set up for Vidarbha as well Marathwada, but Konkan has been deprived of such a Board. Just as the lion and the goat are fed on the same plate in a circus, so is the case with Konkan which is treated on par with the developed areas of Pune, Nasik Nagar, Kolhapur and Satara. The problem of Konkan is like that of Bihar. Its problem is similar to the problems of other undeveloped areas in the country. Konkan is sucked dry by Mumbai. The aged people of the Konkan households wait for death and money order. They get meals only when the money order comes from Bombay. Therefore, if Konkan is to be developed....

MR. SPEAKER: Please ask your question now, it is not the occasion to make a speech.

SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY: Sir, I am asking the question. In view of a definite proposal to that effect, why is a time limit not fixed for constituting a Development Board for Konkan? This is my first question.

[*English*]

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, regarding the question of Development Boards, it is at the moment governed by Article 371(2) of the Constitution of India and it has given powers to the Governor of Maharashtra to take action in the matter. The Development Boards, as the hon. Member has correctly said, have already been set up and are functioning in Vidarbha and Marathwada.

The third one is supposed to be set up for the rest of Maharashtra which includes, of course, the Konkan region. But if a separate Development Board only for Konkan is to be formed, then it will require an amendment of Article 371(2). That is the position under the Constitution. It is a fact that the Government of Maharashtra for some years now has been pressing the Government of India and requesting that the separate Development Board for Konkan should be set up. But since this requires an amendment of the Constitution, the matter has not been definitely settled up to now. But the matter is not closed, it is open and it will be under continuing consideration.

[*Translation*]

MR. SPEAKER: Ask your next question.

SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY: When the demand for Uttarakhand was made, the Prime Minister lost no time in announcing a separate Uttarakhand state. Why can't it happen in the case of Maharashtra also? The boundary dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka continues to be unresolved for the last 48 years, nobody cares for it. The development of Konkan will also suffer the same fate. Therefore, I want you to announce a time-bound period, may be of one year or two years, when it will be set up. It is not the first time that constitution will be amended. There have been so many amendments. Make this amendment also.

[*English*]

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: We are quite conscious of the fact that the Konkan area is certainly a backward and undeveloped region, which requires special care and attention.

I may just mention that on the 12th of March, 1991, the then Government of Maharashtra have made a fresh proposal for setting up Development Boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada and the rest of Maharashtra. Again, on 1.1.1994, the Government of Maharashtra furnished a draft scheme. But this scheme did not include a proposal for

separate Development Board for Konkan. It was not mentioned by the State Government. It is a scheme of 1.1.1994. I do not know the reasons.

Subsequently, again, of course, on 25.3.1994, the Government of Maharashtra, within such a short interval, requested the then Prime Minister to initiate the process for amendment of the Constitution to provide for a separate Development Board.

On 18th May, 1995, the then hon. Minister in reply to a Starred Question in this House had said and I quote:—

"The Government is of the view that the Development Board set up under orders of the President for the rest of Maharashtra on 9.3.1994, includes Konkan as well and the special developmental needs of the region should be taken care of by this Board. The Home Minister proposed to discuss the matter with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra."

So, they had some discussions and the view emerged was that there will be no objection to the setting up of a separate Development Board for the Konkan region. The then Home Minister, however, stipulated that apart from the amendment of Article 371(2) the proposed Development Board would need to be carved out of the existing Development Board for the rest of Maharashtra.

Similarly, the financial allocation for the proposed Konkan Development Board should be out of the financial allocation for the Development Board for the rest of Maharashtra only. So, these discussions have been going on; exchanges have been going on. The present Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Manohar Joshi, has also proposed that there should be a separate Development Board. The only question which I am not able to reply to specifically, at the moment, from the hon. Member is how long it may take because the matter is not closed. It is an open question. So far as the process of amending the Constitution, etc. is concerned, there are some objections by the Railways and by certain people.

I am not going into that just now. If the existing Development Board for the rest of Maharashtra is not in a position to effectively cater to the developmental requirements of the Konkan region over the period of next couple of years and the Government is convinced that the area could be developed better if it is separated out under a separate Board, then the matter of creation of a separate Board for Konkan can certainly be considered.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK: Sir, the Hon. Home Minister has not stated the full facts before the House. The then Home Minister wrote a letter on December 4, 1995 to the Chief

Minister of Maharashtra that the Government was prepared to set up such Board and there was no objection to it. It is not that the Legislative Assembly only had made this proposal earlier to that. The Members of Parliament belonging to all political parties had met the Prime Minister in this connection. It was after that meeting that the letter was written by the then Home Minister. The people of Maharashtra want it, the Home Minister wrote a letter to that effect, but the present Home Minister says that there are many legal and constitutional complexities. I want to know what are these legal and constitutional complexities.

[English]

It is just an amendment of the Constitution.

[Translation]

I want to know what really are the difficulties. It has been stated on behalf of the Government just now that some people have opposed it. We want to know who those people are?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: The main difficulty is that the relevant article of the Constitution will have to be amended. If the Government and the House so desire, the process to amend the Constitution can be initiated. As I have just told the House, there was no mention of Konkan in the proposal sent by the State Government in 1994. I do not know why it happened. I am not aware of it.

[English]

SHRI RAM NAIK: The Constitution did not provide for that. That is why, after constituting three Boards, a fresh proposal came. Since the purpose of that Development Board is to improve the backward region, if Mumbai and Pune are included in the Statutory Board, that is of no use. That is why the proposal came subsequently.

[Translation]

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: There is no dispute about the objection raised against setting up of a Board for Konkan. A person named Yashvant Jijabeg Mohit made a writ petition to the Mumbai High Court—petition No. 2481, 1980.—

[English]

challenging as *ultra vires* of the Constitution

[Translation]

the provision that gives special powers to the Governor. He has said that

[English]

the special responsibility given to the Governor gives him direct control which is against the basic structure of the

Constitution and the democratic norms prevalent in the rest of India. Now, this case is *sub judice*. It is still pending before a Division Bench.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK: That was long back...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: This is pending...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you I want to tell the hon. Minister that this Board that has been set up under article 371 of the Constitution is of no use to Vidarbha. The rights of the people have been entrusted to the Governor. The thinking of the people of Vidarbha today is that they want nothing short of Vidarbha State. They consider it as their life...*(Interruptions)*

Sir, I have a right to ask a question. There is great dissatisfaction among the people of Vidarbha. The people of Vidarbha have not benefited as a result of their rights having been given away to the Governor. Dismiss the Board and fulfill the people's demand...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: It is for the Minister to decide whether he can reply or not. If the Minister has no information, I will not insist on him. This relates to Maharashtra. Shri Meghe, please ask the question.

[Translation]

SHRI DATTA MEGHE: It is the demand of two crore people of Vidarbha you must consider it.

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE: Sir, he is only making a speech, not asking any question.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow you.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Megheji, please ask question. No speech can be made now. I do not allow it.

... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: You cannot make a speech now. Please sit down.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, do you want to answer?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, the question which has been tabled and to which I am trying to reply does not pertain to the question of setting up a separate State for Vidarbha. Separate statehood for Vidarbha is not the subject matter of this question.

[Translation]

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE: I have been elected from Konkan. Sir, they want to put impediments in the development of Konkan. Please do not do that.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I have given the floor to Shri Suresh Prabhu, Megheji, nothing will go on record.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Sarpotdar, nothing will go on record.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. It is enough. You cannot do like that.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Prabhu, nothing is going on record.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: The Maharashtra people have always been united. Why are you agitating now?

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down, I am on my legs.

*(Interruptions)**

[Translation]

SHRI PRAKASH VISHWANATH PARANJPE: What did you do for four years? You only suppressed the people of Vidarbha.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: You do not have to shout like that. Please do not shout like that. You are inside the House.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. I am standing. You are the leader of a party. You cannot be standing when I am standing.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You are the leader of a party. The leaders should behave little differently from the others.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR: That is not necessary. Each and every Member of Parliament should be given a chance.

MR. SPEAKER: I have allowed a Member of your party. He wants to ask a supplementary question.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this question concerns me directly because I represent the constituency of Konkan area which has been neglected all throughout and I am happy to learn from the hon.

*Not recorded

Minister that he also shares the same perception about the backwardness of the region. But now, our people are not going to be content with such lip sympathy expressed by the hon. Minister. When we heard that separate States were being created, we never asked for a separate State. We are willing to work within the purview of the Constitution. We have been a part of one of the most developed regions of Maharashtra, the Western Maharashtra. The Konkan area which has been neglected is more backward than Marathwada and Vidarbha.

MR. SPEAKER: That has been said by the Minister himself. What is your question?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: What was the criterion for such Boards to be created and if the criterion is applicable to Konkan, why was the Board not created? What is the constitutional hurdle that the Minister perceives in creation of the separate Board?

In view of the fact that—as the Minister has already said on the floor of the House—it is going to take some time, is the Government of India contemplating to offer a special grant to Konkan for the intervening period so that the backwardness should not wait for the constitutional modalities to be got over? Is the Government contemplating the constitution of a committee of the Members of Parliament hailing from that region so that such *ad hoc* grants could be monitored and it is ensured that they reach the targeted groups?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, the whole idea of setting up these Development Boards for different regions of Maharashtra—whether it was right or wrong I cannot say—is precisely this that such regions should be given special assistance through these Development Boards for overcoming their backwardness and under-developed nature.

Now Shri Datta Meghe, of course, is very emphatic and thinks that as far as the Development Board for Vidarbha is concerned, it is useless. It has not done any work at all. So, he is entitled to his opinion. There may be differing opinions on the actual functioning and performance of the Development Boards which are already in existence. But the hon. Member here is not pressing—at least what I understood—for a separate Development Board for Konkan.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: No, Sir, I am saying that why the Development Board has not been created which should have been created along with Marathwada and Vidarbha? If it is not created that is a mistake which should *ab initio* be rectified.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, why it was not set up in the first place, I cannot say. The Government which

was there at that time should reply or Shri Pawar is here, he can throw some light on this matter.

As far as the proposal that there should be again an *ab initio* setting in motion the process for setting up a separate Board for Konkan is concerned, I have told you already that the matter is not closed and it is open. It can be done provided it is quite clear that the Development Board which is for the rest of Maharashtra apart from Vidarbha and Marathwada, is not able successfully to tackle the problems of Konkan. Then certainly it can be taken up...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE: Mr. Speaker Sir, please also allow me to speak....

MR. SPEAKER: This is the time for asking question, not making a speech.

[English]

I have allowed Shri Sharad Pawar.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, Article 371A says, 'there will be a separate Board for Vidarbha and Marathwada and the rest of the Maharashtra.' The Konkan region comes under the rest of the Maharashtra. The Konkan region is one of the backward regions, that is why the Maharashtra Assembly and the Council both passed a unanimous resolution recommending the Government of India to make a suitable amendment to Article 371A and make a special provision for Konkan. Is the Government of India going to apply their mind for setting up a separate Board for Konkan which has been proposed by the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, I have already made it clear that as far as the question of setting up a separate Development Board for the Konkan region is concerned, we have not rejected this demand, our mind is open and action can be taken. But there has been some confusion in between. Somebody is saying that the Development Board itself is a useless thing.

Secondly, it will require an amendment of the Constitution. So, that can be done provided that is the general feeling and general desire of the House.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Somebody might be thinking that this Board is not useful or that it is useless. But there are unanimous recommendations of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and the Council both. So, this is a general feeling in every corner of the State. Therefore, is the Government of India going to apply their mind and propose an amendment to Article 371 in the near future?

MR. SPEAKER: I think, the Minister has already answered it by saying that it is not a closed

matter and that the Government is still applying its mind on that

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: There is no confusion in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister did not say that there is confusion in Maharashtra. It could be somewhere else.

[Translation]

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE: The State of Maharashtra is at present under Shiv Sena-BJP rule. But before this, it was under the Congress Party rule and the attitude of the Congress Government towards Konkan issue was no different. Konkan has always been a backward region and today when we are asking for a Statutory Development Board, efforts are being made to put hurdles in the way of development of Konkan by putting forward the demand for Vidarbha State. There are Development Boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada and the rest of Maharashtra as a result of which these areas have greatly benefited. But Konkan is still nursing a dream for its development. The people of Konkan are restive and I want to know what this Government has done to the proposal of the State legislature...

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Please ask the question now. You cannot make speeches. If everybody makes speeches, we have to do away with the Question Hour.

[Translation]

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE: In the context of the proposal sent by the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, I want to know from the Home Minister of the United Front Government as to whether he proposes to take immediate steps to set up a Development Board for Konkan?

[English]

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, I have again to repeat what I had said earlier.

MR. SPEAKER: I know that the next question will also be repeated and again the same answer has to be repeated. You can repeat it now.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: The hon. Members need not have any apprehension that there is any objection or resistance from the Central Government towards setting up of a separate Development Board only for the Konkan region. This will be favourably considered, in spite of some objections which are being raised and which you are seeing for yourself. I hope that we will be able to initiate the process as soon as possible.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, some questions have been asked and replies have been given. After my asking the question, I know that I will get the same reply. The only thing I would like to find out is—in the case of Konkan, after passing the resolution in the Maharashtra State Assembly, a strong unanimous recommendation was sent to the Centre—why has the Centre not taken this particular proposal into account? Is there any specific reason? He said, in 1980, someone had filed a writ petition in the High Court and because of that they have been thinking it over. After having that writ petition, this Government has taken the decision of forming various district development boards. In the case of Konkan, if at all any amendment is required in the Constitution, why has that amendment not been moved? After the parliamentary elections, after this Eleventh Lok Sabha has been constituted, a number of amendments have been introduced here. Why this particular amendment, despite having the recommendation from the State of Maharashtra, has not been undertaken?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, as far as I am aware, I may be wrong, there is no special reason for this. What is being hinted is that there is some kind of a discrimination against the Konkan region. I am not aware of any such deliberate policy or attitude on the part of the Central Government. The hon. Members referred to the two resolutions which were unanimously passed by the Maharashtra Assembly and asked as to why no action has been taken on that. How can I reply to that question? We were not here at that time.

The unanimous resolutions of Assemblies are very important, no doubt. But they are not always found acceptable to many people. For example, the Uttar Pradesh Assembly had three times passed unanimous resolutions in favour of a separate State of Uttarakhand. In spite of that, it became a controversial question until we decided to go ahead with it. In the case of Konkan, I do not think that there is any special reason for opposing the demand for a Development Board. It should be there. That is my own opinion also. I hope that now, in view of the general feelings which are being expressed here, we will be able to start the process as soon as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: It is good enough.

[Translation]

Demand/Production of Fruits and Vegetables

524. SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS:

SHRI D. P. YADAV:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state: