

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Monday, March 3, 1997/Phalgun 12, 1918 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at three minutes past
Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

[Translation]

SHRI S.P. JAISWAL (Varanasi) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to draw your kind attention towards the students' agitation in Varanasi, which is spreading in the eastern Uttar Pradesh and also in the entire State.

MR. SPEAKER : Not now, afterwards please.

SHRI S.P. JAISWAL : O.K. Sir.

MR. SPEAKER : Afterwards please, in the zero hour.

Q.No. 121 - Shri Mahendra Singh Bhatti - Absent.

Q.No. 122 - Dr. G.R. Sarode- Absent.

Q.No. 123 - Prof. Prem Singh Chandumajra

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Rakesh Mohan Committee Report

[Translation]

*123. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the recommendations made in the report of the Rakesh Mohan Committee regarding the deplorable condition of roads of the country and suggestions to improve them; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto and the action taken to implement these recommendations?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT
(SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) Yes Sir,

(b) Among various recommendations made in the report of Rakesh Mohan Committee, the following have been accepted in respect of National Highways :

- (i) Bankable projects relating to bypasses, bridges, road over bridges and 4-laning of National Highways to be built through private sector.
- (ii) Highway development policy has been adopted.

(iii) Comprehensive guidelines and procedures for awarding works to private sector approved.

[Translation]

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA : In his reply Hon'ble Minister has stated that Rakesh Mohan Committee has suggested that for infrastructure development, the work will be allotted to the private sector. Only 40% of the collection made on account of vehicle tax, excise tax and on account of traffic on roads has been spent on roads. Whether Government are ready to spent this entire collection on the development of roads? Many roads have been designated on four lane under the scheme, but one work thereon has not been completed even after ten years. The work on NH-1, from Karnal to Ambala-Rajpura-Sarhind has remained incompleted for the last ten years. By when, this project will be completed. Some National Highways are with state highways. These are very important for the people. Chandigarh to Bhatinda section has not been declared as National Highway. It connects Punjab to Rajasthan. Similarly Chandigarh to Shimla via Ropar has not been declared as National Highway. Punjab is a border state. The section between Chandigarh and Ludhiana.....(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Ask the question.

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA : Whether you will declare it as National Highway?

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, so far as Punjab is concerned, allotment from CRF for 1994-95, the allotment was Rs. 259 Lakhs for 1995-96, it was Rs. 213 Lakhs and for 1996-97, it was protected from lakhs Rs. 207 crore. It is not as though we have not allotted anything. The hon. Member's statement seems to be that we have not allotted anything and no work is going on.

Regarding the other aspect about which the hon. Member has asked, that is the declaration of national highways, I would say that so far, from the time this Government took charge, there has been no declaration of National Highways for the simple reason that there has been a financial crunch. Now, in the present Budget, an allocation has been made and there is room for rethinking. I will take into consideration the roads which the hon. Member has suggested in the light of the present Budget allocations.

[Translation]

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Thank you. As per the data given by the minister, there has been continuous decrease in the yearwise allocation. The allocation to Punjab had been reduced from Rs. 259 lakh to Rs. 214 lakh in 1994-95. In 1996 it is only Rs. 207 lakh. Similarly, allocation to Haryana state has also been reduced. Allocation for Andhra and Rajasthan has also been reduced. Rakesh Mohan Committee has stressed that maximum part of the budget allocation should be spent on infrastructure. Only then the economy of the country will be strengthened. The volume of trade and population is

increasing. I want to know that whether road facility is increasing in the same ratio as that of trade?

[English]

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, the allocation of funds from the Central Road Fund is made on a lump sum basis having regard to the accruals on the basis of consumption of petrol in respect of States.

If a scheme is sanctioned and if funds are also available, then we are allocating them. While allocating funds, there is no choice of any particular State. We are allocating funds on standard norms. On the basis of these norms, it has been allotted to Punjab as well.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : As per the Mohan Rakesh Committee's report, it is clear that only 1.3 percent of roads in the country are four-lanes and the rest are single-line roads. That is why more road accidents do take place. These are more serious than the atom bomb explosion. The people of the country are agitated over this state. I want to know whether you will utilise this allocation of Rs. 27,000 crore for making four lanes roads.

As regards the reply in part (b), I would like to know whether you will announce an All India Transport Road policy to check accidents and to maintain the road standard.

[English]

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, we have already taken a decision with regard to conversion of single lane into double lane. Regarding conversion of double lane into four lane, as I have submitted in the answer to the earlier Question put by an hon. Member, there is some easing of funds this time in the Budget. Therefore, we will think about it. Already we have received suggestions in this regard. We will decide about converting two lane into four lane keeping in mind the funds available.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Hon'ble Speaker, Sir, I want to ask a question regarding Bihar from the Hon'ble Minister. There has been a continuous decrease in the outlay for National Highways in Bihar. This outlay for 1994-95 was Rs. 166 crores whereas it has been decreased to Rs. 25 crores in 1995-96 and to Rs. 10 crores in 1996-97. The roads are in a miserable state. No new National Highway has been announced for the State. I want Ministers' protection in this regard. There are more pit falls on the roads. The condition of the roads had not been improved as compared to the increase of volume of traffic. I want that the outlay should be increased and roads should be made four-lanes one. Whether the assurance given in the past for Patna, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Bhithamore, Soneversha will be fulfilled during this financial year and new National Highways will be constructed?

As regard the answer in part (b), whether allocation will be made and work will be started for new highways in Darbhanga, Farisganj. I want justice for Bihar.

[English]

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, as we have already submitted, the norms for allocation from the Central Road Fund is made on lump sum basis having regard to the accruals on the basis of consumption of petrol except aviation fuel in the respective States. On the basis of existing norms.....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Hon. Speaker, Sir, we want your protection(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, I am answering the question about Bihar. After this, I will answer this question(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Yes. He has made a demand as to whether you would consider it favourably or not.

.....(Interruptions)

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, the account which the hon. Member has read out is perfectly correct. As I have already stated, the accrual of petrol is accounted and is being credited to the States. The suggestions made by my friend are being considered. As I have already submitted, there is also some easing of funds from the Budget. Therefore, I will think about it and the suggestions would be carried out....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question has not been answered. I want your protection...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : You had not asked the question. You had given only a suggestion.

SHRI LALMUNI CHAUBEY : The public fund is being looted there. No road construction work is being undertaken. The fund is being diverted to Non-plan expenditure. No new scheme for road construction is being started in Bihar.

MR. SPEAKER : You have heard about Bihar. Now please listen about North-east.

..... (Interruptions)

SHRI LALMUNI CHAUBEY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, you knew about the state of affairs in Bihar(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I understand your sentiments. To be very frank, even I am tempted to put a supplementary question!

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, the hon. Minister has recently visited the North-Eastern parts; and to our great satisfaction, he has admitted to the Press that the roads in the North-East are bad and the Central Government is going to place sufficient funds for National Highways. As against this, I would like to specifically ask about a policy matter.

During 1995-96, the Government of India gave money road-wise, specifically, after the Prime Minister's visit. A

sanction letter was also issued. But after this Government came to power, he wrote to me saying that money cannot be sanctioned road-wise as the money was surrendered. Has the policy been changed or what is the policy for allocation of funds under CRF, to the State Governments?

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : It is not as though we are taking away the money from the States. As I have already submitted, norms are there and the senior Member must be knowing about the norms also. The allocation is made on the basis of consumption of petrol except aviation fuel.....(Interruptions) That is all I can say(Interruptions) Therefore, it is not as though step-motherly attitude is being taken towards this state (Interruptions)

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : It was sanctioned road-wise, specifically. How can that be done?.....(Interruptions)

SHRI T.G VENKATRAMAN : Sir , the allocated fund may be there; but unless and until funds are released from the Budget, I cannot do anything. I can get it now and I will do it now. I have got some 'releases' and I will do it now....(Interruptions)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : Sir, you may agree for a Half-an-Hour discussion. It is a very very important sector. They have given Rs. 500 crore to the National Highways Authority for road sector in this Budget; and they say that they want to develop infrastructure. So, you have to allow a Half-an-Hour discussion on this. Every hon. Member is worried about it.

MR. SPEAKER : Even in the last Session of Parliament, there was a question on this. I directed the Government to make a special statement about the position and it was followed by a Half-an-Hour discussion. Till today, I think, the result is the same. If the House wants, I have no objection in allowing a Half-an-Hour discussion.

[Translation]

SHRI LALMUNI CHAUBEY : How much money is going to be spent by the Government there(Interruptions) It should be seriously considered and should be stopped...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : The State wise details are given in the Q.No. 121.

[English]

The questioner is absent. But you can get it.

.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : You have made your point. Mr. Rajesh Pilot has been a former Minister. Therefore, I am allowing him.

.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I understand.

.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I have myself said that even I am tempted to put a supplementary question. How do you expect me to express more?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : Sir, the National Highways Authority was set up with the sole purpose of developing the infrastructure of roads. The hon. Minister says that he really cannot help because he does not have funds. In this Budget also, for National Highways, Rs. 500 crore has been allocated for the National Highways Authority which is nothing for a country like India. So, I would request the hon. Minister to bring a white paper on this subject because in 1986-87, there was Cabinet decision for a cess on petrol to go to the road sector. It was a Government decision which has not been implemented by the Finance Ministry till today. Till such time that funds do not go to the road sector, the hon. Minister cannot do anything. So, let him bring a white paper on the whole subject as to why from 1986 the allocation for this has gone down and why cess on petrol is not being transferred to the road sector. It may be Half-an-Hour discussion or one hour discussion or whichever way you may like it but we must discuss it, Sir(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Shatrughan Prasad Singh, let us listen to the Minister.

.....(Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Sir, this is a musical chair system that you are adopting that the present Minister is replying to the former Minister....(Interruptions)

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Mr. Speaker Sir, after the Half-an-Hour discussion here as well as in the other House, I had taken the matter to the Cabinet and I was demanding for five per cent cess. I have pressed for the Resolution passed by the Parliament in 1989, It is still pending with the Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the Budget has been presented. Now, as the hon. Member has stated, there is an improvement and he has also very clearly stated that this fund is no fund at all. But there is some hope in this regard, namely, the service charges are going to be handed over to the Central Road Fund. In that event, it is going to be handed over to the NHAI, according to the announcement in the Budget. As the hon. Member has stated, the matter is still pending with the Cabinet and I am also pressing for it and we will see to the end. If the fund which is actually the cess which is going to be collected as service charges is allotted to the Road Fund, then, naturally I will be able to gulp all these difficulties. So, we have to wait for the decision of the Cabinet and I am waiting for the Cabinet decision.

MR. SPEAKER : The specific question is whether you are willing to bring a white paper on this or not.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Yes. I shall try to do it; I will have a consultation.

MR. SPEAKER : That might even expedite your Cabinet decision. All right. The Minister has agreed. I think this is a very good thing.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Sir, as you have suggested, I will go through the entire thing and try to place a paper.