

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Thursday, August 30, 1990/Bhadra 8, 1912
(Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Central road fund

*304 SHRI MAHESHWAR SINGH Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state

(a) whether amounts are being deposited regularly in the Central Road Fund as per the Central Road Fund Resolution and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI K P UNNIKRISHANAN) (a) and (b) On 13th May, 1988, the Lok Sabha unanimously adopted a resolution for augmenting the Central Road Fund for development and maintenance of Roads by raising the levy amount to be set apart out of the duty on customs and excise on the Motor spirit

and Diesel Oil and setting apart the proceeds thereof in the Central Road Fund, the accruals to be utilised for Road Development. The Rajya Sabha also adopted the same resolution. But the accruals in the Central Road Fund, as provided for in the resolution, have not been made available for disbursements so far.

[Translation]

SHRI MAHESHWAR SINGH: Mr Speaker, Sir, roads are very important to us. It is a matter of regret that even after 43 years of independence, we have not been able to link even 36 per cent of our villages with roads and the condition of fifty per cent of the rural roads is indeed deplorable. The paucity of funds is the main reason for it. In 1926, the Central Road Fund was set up on the recommendations of Jaykar Commission Report.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Member, you may ask two questions. The entire House is interested in your questions. You better ask questions in brief so as to enable the hon. Minister to answer you in brief.

SHRI MAHESHWAR SINGH: Mr Speaker, Sir, as has been stated by the Minister, a Resolution was adopted on 13th May, 1988 to levy 5% duty on customs and excise on the Motor spirit and Diesel oil and setting apart the proceeds thereof in the Central Road Fund. Accordingly, an amount of Rs. 320 crores was to be deposited to that fund but it has not so far been implemented. At the current prices, this amount is equal to

four thousand crore of rupees. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to why that Resolution was not implemented although the same was adopted by both the Houses of Parliament. Is it not an act of contempt of the House? Secondly, I would like to know whether the hon. Minister will take up this matter with the Finance Minister so that the Resolution which was passed in 1988 could be implemented.

[English]

SHRI K P UNNIKRISHANAN *Mr. Speaker*, Sir, I share the concern expressed by the hon. Member about the state of roads, particularly in the rural areas which provide the basic link with the market as well as for transportation of men and material and other services. The Parliament, in its wisdom, passed this resolution on 13th May, 1988. But unfortunately the Ministry of Finance was of the opinion that they did not have the kind of resources envisaged in their possession. As such, even though my predecessor earlier and myself after taking over the charge, have been raising this matter with my esteemed colleague, the Finance Minister, so far there has been no resolution of this problem. That is where it stands now.

[Translation]

SHRI MAHESHWAR SINGH *Mr. Speaker*, Sir, part (b) of my question has not been replied. Why the resolution was not implemented? Himachal Pradesh is a backward State where roads are the main means of transportation. This year out of the total amount of Rs. 9 crores deposited in the Central Road Fund, a meagre sum of Rs. 9,81,000 has been allocated to Himachal Pradesh whereas an amount of Rupees one lakh is required to construct one kilometer to Kuchha road in the hilly regions. With the amount made available to the State from the Central Road Fund, not more than 10 kms of Kuchha road would be constructed. I would like to know whether the amount to be given from the fund to Himachal Pradesh will be increased and whether the hon. Minister would take up the matter with the hon. Fi-

nance Minister to implement that resolution?

[English]

SHRI K P UNNIKRISHANAN *Sir*, I sympathise with the request and demand made by the hon. Member. I fully share his concern about the state of roads in Himachal Pradesh as well. There has not been any augmentation of the Central Road Fund to give any particular or new allocation for the States. That is the position as of now.

[Translation]

SHRI MAHESHWAR SINGH *Mr. Speaker*, Sir, reply to Part (b) has not been received. Will the hon. Minister take up this matter with the Finance Minister?

MR SPEAKER He has already replied but you did not hear him.

[English]

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE Is it not a fact that out of this Fund 65 percent was to go to the States for the development of State roads. Is it also not a fact that a solemn assurance was given on the floor of the House that this Resolution will be implemented? Therefore I want to know whether this implies a breach of privilege of the House by the Government.

MR SPEAKER That is not the question which the Minister can reply.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE I would like to know what would be the reaction of you and the Minister on this. After all, by this allocation, our States would get more funds and more employment generation.

SHRI K P UNNIKRISHANAN The Resolution mentions that half percent of the accrual be utilised for defraying the cost of administration of the Fund, 35 1/2 percent of accruals be utilised by Union Government for development and maintenance of national highways and balance 64 percent of accruals from the Fund be utilised by the

State and Union Territories for development and maintenance of the State roads on the basis of petrol and diesel consumption in each State and Union Territory

Therefore, she is right in saying that this was what envisaged in the Resolution

SHRI P R KUMARAMANGALAM A senior lady Member, hon Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has raised a very relevant point on whether it is or it is not a contempt of the House. I think, the question in itself has the answer because definitely it is a contempt of the House. But what really arises is, this is not a simple matter where a minor issue or mistake has been done or somebody has overlooked it. It is something more basic.

Both the Houses of Parliament by resolution passed it. It is binding on the Government. It is definitely binding on the Executive. What surprises me is to see that the Finance Ministry seems to have become more powerful, and the bureaucrats in the Finance Ministry have really become the rulers of the nation. The people are not sovereign. We find the situation, even though there is collective responsibility. The Prime Minister is present and I would like to draw his attention. If I can, I do not know if I can catch his eye and ear. The issue is that the previous Government itself I do not think that they can also get off the hook. We find in our system, it is Parliament that ultimately represents the people and the people are sovereign. When Parliament by resolution takes a decision, how is it that the bureaucrats and the Finance Ministry can put their foot down and say, "No"? Is there a provision for this? I would like to know from the Prime Minister as to why is it that even now it is not being implemented. I have said it categorically. Nobody can be let off the hook on this.

I would like to know specifically from the Hon. Minister for Surface Transport and from the Prime Minister who is present. Because there is something like the collective responsibility of the Cabinet, the Surface Transport Minister cannot hide behind the statement saying that he is getting in contact with the

Finance Minister nor can the Prime Minister say 'It is not my portfolio' because this is a matter of real importance where the prestige of this House, the prestige of the people and the very system is in question. This deals with unemployment also directly because laying of roads in one of the biggest employment sources.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

You should also support me. It is not so that my state alone is in need of roads, roads are required in your state also.

[English]

I would like to know specifically as a commitment how long they will take to ensure that the Resolution is implemented.

(b) I would like to know whether the Prime Minister would assure as that he would intervene and see to it that this Resolution is implemented that 65% of the funds together with the arrears because with the arrears it comes to nearly Rs. 2,000 to 3,000 crores. I think, would be allocated.

I would like to know specifically whether this could be done.

SHRI K P UNNIKRISHANAN In a matter like this, it is very difficult to set a time table. As I was saying that my predecessor earlier and I have taken up this question with the Minister of Finance. I talked to him and requested him and invited his attention to this Resolution and it is the considered view of our Ministry that it should be implemented and funds made available.

SHRI P R KUMARAMANGALAM He has to speak on behalf of the Government.

SHRI K P UNIKRISHNAN It is very difficult to set a time table and I can assure the hon. Member that effort should not be lacking on our part to see that the Resolution is implemented.

MR SPEAKER The Prime Minister

but the thing is this that assurance

SHRIP R KUMARAMANGALAM The Prime Minister should answer This is a matter of contempt of the House

[*English*]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH) I will look into the point raised by the hon. Member

The Prime Minister has said that he would look into it We will take it as an assurance

[*Translation*]

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE I thank the Prime Minister positively in this regard (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJMANGAL PANDE That is why we want that the Prime Minister should give either an assurance or a discussion be arranged under Rule 193

MR SPEAKER Mr Saifuddin Choudhury

[*English*]

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY The Prime Minister has assured that he will look into it

The Prime Minister's saying that 'I will look into it' does not carry any connotation The Prime Minister must implement it

MR SPEAKER Yes The Prime Minister has said that he would look into it

SHRI RAM NAIK In view of the Prime Minister's assurance that he will look into this problem, will the Government decide by the end of this year at least? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY Now I do not have any further question to put I wanted the Prime Minister to intervene and make an assurance

SHRI RAM NAIK My question remains to be replied

MR SPEAKER We can pass on to the next question

MR SPEAKER Please take your seat I am calling Mr. Unnikrishnan

(*Interruptions*)

(*Interruptions*)

MR SPEAKER I think after the Prime Minister has said and the Minister has already said, no new information will come forth

[*Translation*]

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR This is a question which involves the Finance Ministry There should be a discussion under 193

MR SPEAKER Pandeji, you are well conversant with the rules of the House Let us hear Shri Unnikrishnan for the time being That would be looked into by the Business Advisory Committee

[*Translation*]

[*English*]

PROF. PREM KUMAR DHUMAL Please arrange a discussion on it

SHRI RAM NAIK Sir, I will repeat the question In view of the Prime Minister's assurance that he will look into this aspect, my question is Will this decision be taken at least by the end of this year? (*Interruptions*)

MR SPEAKER I will see,

SHRI RAM NAIK It is good that the Hon. Prime Minister has given an assurance

SHRI K. P. UNNIKRISHNAN: As I have already explained, it is very difficult to

set a time-table for questions of this kind Government will take the decision considering all the factors (*Interruptions*)

MR SPEAKER Please take your seats Let us hear the Prime Minister

[*Translation*]

Prime Minister is speaking again

[*English*]

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH Sir, it will not be fair to the House to give an assurance without looking into the matter (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY This is concerning the unanimous Resolution adopted by both the Houses of Parliament The Government is bound to implement it It is not a question of whether to implement it or not to implement it He has to say that it is implemented It is not a question of Government interference This is a Resolution passed by the Parliament They have to implement it

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA This is a case of implementation of the Resolution (*Interruptions*)

MR SPEAKER Mrs Choudhury, the Prime Minister is on his legs Please take your seat

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA He can assure the House that it will be implemented (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH Just listen to me I am fully cognisant of the sentiments of the hon Members on this matter What I said was that the Minister for Surface Transport mentioned that he has referred the matter to the Finance Ministry The previous Government had passed it During 1988, the Resolution was passed in all earnestness. There must have been some problems Certainly owing to weighty considerations it could not implement it right

away I don't doubt the intention of the previous Government So I have to find out as to what were the problems what is the difficulty before the Finance Ministry It is not our intention to just report to you the difficulty We have to find out what are the circumstances and then come in right earnest saying this is the position this is what can be done in the present circumstances

[*Translation*]

Construction of Road in Forest Areas of Madhya Pradesh

*305 SHRI CHHAVIBAM ARGAL Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state

(a) whether problems are being faced in the construction of roads passing through forest areas in dacoit prone areas adivasi areas and those being constructed under the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme due to non transfer of land by the Forest Department in Madhya Pradesh and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Union Government to speed up the construction of the approved roads?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI UPENDRA NATH VERMA) (a) It is true that some delay is being caused in the construction of roads passing through forest areas in Madhya Pradesh because diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes is governed under the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and prior approval of the Central Government has to be secured before stating the construction on forest lands

(b) To facilitate the preparation of proposals by the State Governments for obtaining prior approval of the Government of India, detailed guidelines have been issued by the Ministry of Environment & Forests A proforma for supplying the necessary infor-