

**WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION  
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

AS PASSED BY RAJYA SABHA

**SECRETARY GENERAL:** Sir, I lay on the Table of the House the Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Bill, 1976, as passed by Rajya Sabha.

**DEMANDS FOR GRANTS, 1976-77—  
Contd.**

*Ministry of Shipping and Transport  
Contd.*

**MR. SPEAKER:** The House will now take up further discussion and voting on the Demands for Grants under the control of the Ministry of Shipping and Transport. The time already taken is 1 hour 55 minutes. The balance time left is 2 hours. I shall call the minister at 1.30 to reply.

**SHRI BISWANARAYAN SHASTRI (Lakhimpur):** Sir, the report of the Ministry of Shipping and Transport is very interesting. At the beginning it says that it is the life blood of the nation's commerce and industry. It is true that if the inland water transport system is properly developed, it will be the life blood of the nation, but as it stands, it does not promise such a bright future. Therefore, I urge upon the ministry to take proper steps for the development of the inland water transport system through the State Boards and the Central Board in this regard.

Coming to my own State, there are large quantities of goods carried nowadays by road transport, which according to reliable estimates, costs four times as much as water transport and three times as much as railway transport. Therefore, I would suggest that proper guidance, technical knowhow and financial assistance should be provided for development of water transport system in that part of the country. The Central Inland Water Board had done something, but after the creation of Bangladesh and the subsequent happenings there the inland water transport system which used to carry

goods from Gauhati and other parts of Assam to Calcutta has practically now been stopped. I do not know the political position there, but if this route is revived, most of the goods, particularly tea and jute can be carried to Calcutta at a cheaper price, which will be beneficial not only to the producer but to the industry as a whole. In this context, I would like to give the background. Before the railway line was installed there, every pound of tea used to be carried by steamer from Dibrugarh, Gauhati and other parts of Assam to Calcutta. Then it was taken over by the railways and now it has been taken over by road transport. And the result is that there are a number of accidents, pilferages and thefts. On the other hand, the industries have to bear the high cost of transport. Therefore, I urge upon the Ministry to take up the question of carrying those goods from Assam to Calcutta by the river transport system, through Bangladesh.

Coming to the question of the national highway, I would say that the principle laid down by the Ministry, according to the reply given to my question the other day. Is that it should connect two States, or a foreign country, or that it should have strategic importance, etc. Against this background, I would like to say that the road running through the northern side of Brahmaputra, from Amingaoan to Jonai in Assam is now called the north trunk road, has strategic importance. I understand that some financial assistance is given to the Government of Assam for repairing, widening and strengthening this road; but it has not yet been declared as a National Highway. This is, strategically, a very important road, as it is known to everybody that the railway line running parallel to this road was constructed and inaugurated at the time of the Chinese invasion of the country. The last point of this road is Jonai which lies in a transferred area. Perhaps it is known to the Ministry that it was previously in Arunachal Pradesh which was known