

**MOTOR VEHICLES (AMENDMENT)
BILL**

AS PASSED BY RAJYA SABHA

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I lay on the Table of the House the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 1976, as passed by Rajya Sabha.

12.03 hrs.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHTH REPORT**

SHRI H. N. MUKHERJEE (Calcutta—North-East): I beg to present the Hundred and eighty-eighth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in their Hundred and Sixty-eighth Report on Directorate of Estates (Ministry of Works and Housing).

12.04 hrs.

**STATEMENT RE. RE-STRUCTURING
OF NEWS AGENCIES**

MR. SPEAKER: Statement by Minister, Shri V. C. Shukla.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA): May I lay it on the Table?

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA (Jainagar): It is very important. He should read it.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): We can wait for 5 minutes. It is very important. He should read it.

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA: The adequacy of coverage and the quality of news-service rendered by the existing four teleprinter agencies in the country have been under study for some time. Newspapers are an important medium for the education of the people and the growth of national consciousness. The scope and the complexion of news depend to a large extent on the services received from the news-agencies. Newspapers

in India, specially language papers and medium and small papers, are at present not able to reflect adequately the events and developments in Indian life and the aspiration of the people, because the existing news-system in the country has not been able to provide, such service. Our news-system has also not been able to project to the world outside a proper image of the country, with the result that several foreign news agencies or newspapers, which generally toe the political line of their respective governments, have had a free field to malign India.

One of the main reasons why coverage and the standard of news-service have not improved is because the agencies have been starved of resources. The PTI and UNI mainly belong to the big newspapers themselves, several of whom are controlled by certain business houses. They have never provided to these agencies the resources required for creating an all-pervasive and efficient network for collection and dissemination of news. The multiplicity of agencies has only resulted in duplication of efforts, out of resources that were already meagre. The number of their offices is totally inadequate in the country and negligible outside. The salaries of the whole-time reporters are low and in some cases not paid regularly. Out of the total cost incurred in production of newspapers, only 105 per cent is paid to the news agencies.

The agencies are, therefore, supported and subsidized heavily through public funds. Loans of over Rs. 60 lakhs have been advanced to these agencies and a heavy recurring assistance flows through liberal subsidies on teleprinter and telegraph charges. In the case of one agency, almost the entire share-capital has been provided by State Governments. The standard of news-service as explained earlier, has not justified this investment and expenditure out of public funds.

[Shri Vidya Charan Shukla]

As regards projection of Indian news outside, the outflow is not more than 1500 to 2000 words per day while the foreign agencies are able to pump in India foreign news at the rate of 25,000 to 50,000 words per day. Even on the World network need has arisen for a single and strong news agency in India, because there is a move amongst the non-aligned and developing countries to co-operate mutually in news-supply, to counter-act the domination over the news-system by the Western and advanced countries. India is a leading participant in these efforts.

It is thus apparent that the country needs a single strong national news agency which would be able to cover all areas, specially rural areas, and all relevant fields of activity, in accordance with well-accepted national goals. Government would encourage a unified set-up which would be able to fulfil these legitimate needs. The organisation should be independent in the true sense of the word, which means that it should be free from the control of vested interests including that of monopoly houses. The management should consist mainly of professional people. It should have well-equipped divisions for language news, foreign news and functional areas such as developmental, cultural and sports news. It should adequately reflect the activities and the moods in the rural areas. One of its main aims should be to give adequate service to language and small and medium papers at convenient rates. The agency should be financially viable and capable of putting on the ground the required organisation. Government are also anxious that the present emoluments of the employees of existing agencies which may merge into the new set-up should be protected and whenever necessary improved. In fact, efficient and experienced employees would have far better prospects in such an organisation, since this is likely to be an expanding one.

Government have noted with satisfaction that the managements as well as the employees' unions of PTI, UNI, Hindustan Samachar and Samachar Bharati have all passed resolutions, supporting the idea of a single and strong national news agency. The managements propose to merge themselves into a single agency. Government would be prepared to assist them in this process in different ways.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore): Sir, we want a discussion on this.

MR SPEAKER: You follow the procedure Item Number 16—Motion for Election to Committee. Shri Anant Prasad Sharma. He is not here. Next item.

12 10 hrs.

REGIONAL RURAL BANKS BILL
contd.

MR SPEAKER: We will now take up further consideration of the following motion moved by Shri Pranab Kumar Mukherjee:

"That the Bill to provide for the incorporation, regulation and winding up of Regional Rural Banks with a view to developing the rural economy by providing, for the purpose of development of agriculture, trade, commerce, industry and other productive activities in the rural areas credit and other facilities, particularly to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and small entrepreneurs, and for matters connected therewith and incidental thereto, be taken into consideration."

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY (Kendrapara): Mr. Speaker, Sir, while I yield to none in my anxiety to see that the 20-point economic programme is implemented in all seriousness, I have a feeling that of late this 20-point economic programme has become a new catechism which is being glibly mouthed from commit-