

[*Translation*]

SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VARMA: The gas found in the basin of Gujarat is flared day and night without being utilised in any way while Gujarat continues to face shortage of gas. Do the Government propose to utilise this gas?

[*English*]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: This question does not arise.

MR. SPEAKER: Next question.

Soviet Credit for Bakreshwar Power Project

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*103. SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN:
SHRI SANAT KUMAR MAN-
DAL:

Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Union Government have since agreed to release the Rs. 700 crore Soviet Credit for 840 MW Bakreshwar Power Project in West Bengal;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN): (a) to (c). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) to (c). The Bakreshwar Project of 630 MW (3x210 MW) in West Bengal is being implemented in the State Sector. In view of paucity of resources, the West Bengal Government have sought permission to avail of Soviet Credit for this project. A clearer project definition would need to be got agreed with the Government of USSR and the modalities of passing on the credit for the

project would have to be evolved in consultation with the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance before a final decision in this regard.

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you are from the neighbouring State of West Bengal, you know that there is a long history of deprivation and disgrace meted out by the Central Government towards West Bengal. To cite one example, the Bakreshwar Power Project is one of those projects. But now the scenario has been changed. Therefore, at the present scenario I did not expect such an answer from the hon. Minister. Sir, you know that the people of West Bengal are very much eager to have this project. They are determined that they will see to it that it is completed. This project is in the list of the West Bengal people. They are shedding their blood to complete the project. Thousands of crores of rupees are needed for this project. But I find now in the reply that some modalities have to be worked out. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether this clarification has been asked by his Department or by the Government of USSR. My next question is....

MR. SPEAKER: You have to put your second question also.

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN: It is in connection with that. In the reply it has been stated that the Planning Commission have to be consulted. Why does the question of Planning Commission come now? This project has already been cleared in the Seventh Five Year Plan itself. I would like to know the details in this regard.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: Sir, I think it should be clear from my reply that, in principle, we have agreed to make the Soviet credit available for the implementation of the Bakreshwar Power Project. What I have said is that during the meeting of the Joint Indo-Soviet Working Group held in February 1990, at that time it was agreed that a clearer project definition indicating utilisation of Soviet technical assistance and the credit would be

decided upon early. These are the modalities which are to be worked out as to how credit is to be routed to the State Government for the completion and implementation of the project. All these details are to be brought out. But, in principle, we have decided to make the Soviet credit available for the completion of the project.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRAHDAN: Thank you very much. Another thing which I have brought to your notice is about some of the proposals of West Bengal Government pending clearance from the Environment Department. I think, in regard to this, you may help to some extent. On this, out of 600 acres of land, 395.70 acres have already been in possession of the Government. Proposal for acquisition of further area of 201 acres of forest land for this area is still awaiting clearance from the Ministry of Environment, Government of India. Would you please look into the matter for early clearance?

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: I do not think, environment clearance arises from this question. But our endeavour is to see that all clearances which are needed are obtained at the earliest so that the work on the projects can be started.

I would like to make one more point because the hon. Member had made this point in his first question about the Planning Commission's approval. The position regarding the Planning Commission is that although the project was accorded in principle, approval by the Planning Commission in December, 1986, the formal clearance by the Planning Commission is still awaited.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: The State of West Bengal is suffering from acute power shortage. Power shortage has become a chronic thing. Load shedding is there almost every-day not only in the cities but also in the rural areas whereby pump sets for irrigation, although established, could not be operated. There are already in existence three power plants at Kolghat, Bandel and Shantaldih. It is reported that the plant load factor of these

three units is 35 megawatt only which has again been disputed by the State of West Bengal stating that it is not 35 megawatt but it is 42 megawatt...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Is this specifically about Bakreshwar?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Yes, Sir. What I want to ask is, while considering the Bakreshwar Project, would the hon. Minister also look into it. In Bakreshwar, it is reported that there is a NRI middlemen who got involved in this. Before giving credit to the Bakreshwar — which we welcome has been a State project — would the accounts be checked up by the hon. Minister? Thirdly, I will request the hon. Minister to send a team of experts for the purpose of studying the acute power shortage in Bengal so that this acrimony is solved.

MR. SPEAKER: Are these not suggestions?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: These are the questions. Therefore, my first question is, whether the Minister would make an enquiry about the involvement of a NRI middleman in the Bakreshwar Project; whether a team of experts would be sent for the purpose of apprising the urgent need of Bakreshwar Project and also to see that the dispute in regard to the plant load factor is settled because Centre is giving one type of information and the State is giving another type of information. Thirdly, the Central Government has already allocated a sum of Rs. 1,328 crores for 1990-91. I would like to know whether out of the total plan outlay for the year 1990-91, Rs. 410 crores has been fixed for energy. Last year, the allotment for West Bengal was Rs. 462 crores. I request the hon. Minister to kindly look into it and answer the three parts of my question.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: My job basically is to ensure optimum utilisation of the existing capacity and to see that the energy requirements of the people are met. If there are any complaints against any NRI or if there is some other irregularity of which

the hon. Member has any information, then surely the other Departments in the Government of India will take care of such complaints. The suggestions which have been made by the hon. Member have been taken note of by me and we will try to examine them.

SHRI K.S. RAO: Power is the key for the economy of any nation. I had been to USSR last year. Keeping in view all the tremendous potentiality that we have to interact trade with Russia and as time is found to be the essence—and particularly keeping in view the hon. Minister who is supposed to be very young and dynamic—I wish to know from him whether he will not lose any time in getting all the details and see that not only the credit is accepted in principle for power but also to see that counter-trade is made to clear that by selling a lot of products which can be sold in Russia from India.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: Again I would say that I have taken note of the points which the hon. Member has made. They will come under the purview of the Commerce Ministry

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: The West Bengal Government which is our good neighbour gives a lot of moral support on this issue. I thank the hon. Minister because he said that in principle the Government of India has agreed. But at the same time the hon. Minister also said that the Planning Commission is yet to clear it. I would like to ask on behalf of my good neighbour State West Bengal, from whom Orissa is also getting power, whether he will fix a time limit—say within six months—in which modalities and discussions with the Planning Commission are over.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: I have already stated that this is only a formality which has to be completed because the Planning Commission has also given its approval in principle. A lot of progress has already been made in respect of Bakreshwar Power Project. I do not see any problem

in getting this clearance from the Planning Commission.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: I am very happy with the answer of the hon. Minister. With regard to this project in the entire Bengal there is a glorious part of the story. The youth and not-so-old used to donate blood and that way collected about Rs. 2 crores for the Bakreshwar Power Project. They did give their blood and collected Rs. 2 crores for this project. Voluntary labour was also given.

There is another part of the story also. The earlier Minister is here. In the past he repeatedly said that foreign credit cannot be given to any State. What I want to know from the Minister is, whether it is true or not that to other States such foreign credit has been given. Today of course for Bakreshwar credit is very important, more than in the past. In the previous regime industrialists were not allowed to come to West Bengal. Now that obstruction is eliminated. They are coming, power needs are increasing and therefore I am happy. I want to know, as a matter of policy also, whether or not any State did get direct foreign credit in the past and will get so in future.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: Sir, I feel that instead of going into the past, it will be more healthy if we look towards the future and it is a fact that sometime ago a view was taken that foreign credit should not be made available to the State projects.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Directly?

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN. Yes, directly. Generally, a view was taken that foreign credit should not be made available for projects which are implemented in the State sector. Now, a different view has been taken and Soviet assistance is being made available for the completion of the Bakreshwar Project. So, I do not think that it is proper to go into all those things. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Sir, I am sorry to say that an acrimony has been injected

into this question by my friend Shri Nirmal Kanti Chatterjee. The point is that even earlier, Soviet credit was being made available and it was proposed that it would be made available for Bakreshwar Project. The simple question was, would Government to Government credit be passed on clearly for a State project. I am glad to hear from the hon. Minister that they have changed the policy for passing on the Government to Government credit. Sir, we had said that multi-lateral credit, World Bank credit and Asiad Bank credit could be passed on. That was the policy. But, strictly if my hon. friend, the Minister for Energy is saying that now there is a change in the policy of the Government that Government to Government credit would also be passed on for State projects—purely State projects—I will be happy because for all other State projects also, the States can ask for same benefit and I hope the Government will be able to pass it on. I would like to know whether they will pass on such credit for Maharashtra projects, for Andhra Pradesh projects, for Karnataka projects, for Haryana projects and for Himachal Pradesh projects. I would like to know categorically from the Government as to what is their policy decision. They cannot make an exception only for Bakreshwar Project. That is what I want to know.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: Sir, the point which I had made was this. I did not say that there was any policy decision, putting a total ban on making foreign credit available to the projects in the State sector. In fact, earlier too in many cases, foreign credit—external assistance—has been made available to the projects in the State sector. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I am talking of bilateral, that is Government to Government credit. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: Yes, this is exactly the point. I think I had made this point that sometime ago a view was taken and I do not think there was any policy decision. A view was taken that the external

assistance should not be made available for the State projects. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I do not want that. Sir, I do not want to embarrass the hon. Minister. There was no policy decision.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: You ask for half-an-hour discussion.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I do not mind. There was no policy decision that no foreign credit will be made available. Multi-lateral credit and World Bank credit were made available for State projects. There is no doubt or dispute on that.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY: What is the difference? *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VASANT SATHE: The difference is this—direct, Government to Government—bilateral credit.

You can get it checked. I don't mind. If you want to make a change in policy, I don't mind there also. But let it be very clear as to what we want.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: Sir, bilateral credits were passed on to State projects till 1987. Even in 1988, it was given to Anpara in Uttar Pradesh.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Sir, this is factually incorrect. *(Interruptions)* The best thing would be to have a discussion. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: My intention is not to join issue with my worthy predecessor. I have great respect for him. I was not trying to counter any of the arguments. In fact, Uran in Maharashtra got German credit. The point which I was making was that on a case to case basis, all these cases have been decided on merit. But at some point of time, a view was taken and I am not finding any fault with that view, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Sir, this external assistance will be made available for the completion of Bakreshwar project through Government of India. It is not as if the State Government is going to negotiate directly with any foreign country. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Now, we will take up the next question.

Slums near Railway tracks in Maharashtra

*104. SHRI BABANRAO DHAKNE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Union Government have requested the Maharashtra Government to shift slums coming within a distance of 50 feet on either side of the railway tracks;

(b) if so, whether Maharashtra Government has agreed to shift the slums; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir. It has also been agreed to reduce the safety distance to 30 feet where the State Government agrees for construction of a boundary wall to separate the safety zone.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BABANRAO DHAKNE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, keeping in view the agreement reached, when will the follow up action be taken?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: The Government would take action only when the State Government agrees finally to the proposals made to them by the Ministry of Railways.

SHRI BABANRAO DHAKNE: Has

Maharashtra Government sent this proposal to you and if not, what steps are being taken by the Central Government to persuade the State Government to agree to this proposal.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Last negotiation in this respect with the State Government took place on 30th October. Thereafter we have heard nothing from the Maharashtra Government

SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA: When was the agreement with the Maharashtra Government arrived at. Safety distance has been reduced to 30 feet and construction of the boundary walls has been started. You may be knowing about it. How many kilometres of the wall has been constructed. May I know the total length of such track falling under Western Railway and the Central Railway, separately? I want to know the details about it. Secondly, I would like to know whether any provision has been made for the slums located within 30 feet of track.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, a dialogue on this issue started in April 1987 and the decision to take positive steps in this regard was taken in January 1989. But the work has not been started so far because a decision is to be formalised between the Maharashtra Government and the Ministry of Railways.

SHRI RAM NAIK: If the proposal submitted to the Central Government by the Government of Maharashtra is accepted about 60-70 km. long wall will have to be constructed to ensure a safety zone. If it is going to bring about improvement in the area beyond the range of 30 feet, will the government take a decision in the matter and convey its no objection so that the work of construction of boundary wall is started?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the State Government enters into a written agreement in this respect and is ready to take the responsibility of construction of a boundary wall, further action can be taken in this matter. It has been