

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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LOK SABHA

*Thursday, December, 4, 1986/
Agrahayana, 13, 1908 (Saka)*

*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of
the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MEMBER SWORN

SHRI M.Y. GHORPADE (Raichur)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

Suspension of Shipping Service between port Blair and Calcutta

*448. SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the shipping service between Port Blair and Calcutta has been suspended ;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor ;

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(c) whether any alternative arrangement has been made to run passenger service from Calcutta ; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT) : (a) and (b) The Passenger shipping service from Calcutta to Port Blair has been temporarily suspended till Dec. '86 due to the very low drafts in the Hooghly river.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. However steps have been initiated to explore the possibility of using Diamond Harbour anchorage as an alternative to Calcutta Port in the long run.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Though the hon. Minister is a good friend of mine, he was not very kind while replying to this question. The shipping services between Calcutta and Port Blair are a historic one, because right from the beginning when Andamans were colonized—from those days—and right from the penal settlement days, the shipping services continue to run till date. Only in 1986 this time, it was found that water draft was so less that the passenger services could not run. Not only that. Before taking such a crucial decision, the Shipping Corporation never bothered to discuss with the Andaman & Nicobar Administration, that this situation has come about, and what should be the alternative arrangements

for the passengers—how will they come from Calcutta. Everyone cannot avail of the Air services.

I would like to put some categorical questions to the hon. Minister. There are vessels that are getting into the Calcutta Port now. I want to ask the Minister whether similar DWT tonnage vessels like *Harsh Vardhan* and *M.V. Andamans* have been stopped or all other vessels are coming to Calcutta Port minus passenger vessels playing between Calcutta and Andaman : (b) Already the Shipping Corporation are getting water draft charged before hand : In that case will he kindly tell us what was the comparative last year and this year ? Are the vessels coming and going ? He told about Andaman harbour anchorage. What was the infrastructure arrangement available for passengers embarkation and disembarkation in Dimond Harbour ?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : I do appreciate the worry of the Member of Parliament. As a friend, he must take sometimes unkind answer also. Every time if I give a kind answer, then every one will take it. But as a friend, he must take sometimes unkind answer also. The Calcutta Port has got a very peculiar situation and to maintain that Port, we spent roughly Rs. 20 crores on the dredging itself. After the monsoon, sometimes, the bed of the river gets sand from silted ; and this time they found that it was slightly more. So, from the safety point of view, they took this precaution and they thought that Vizag was the nearest Port for the people to come from Ranchi and other places. For the passengers who come from Andaman and Nicobar, the administration of Andaman was consulted. They said some of the passengers who are coming from Andaman, they would like—instead of Calcutta Port which is not safe—to be diverted to Vizag. So, this was considered in consultation with the Andaman and Nicobar administration. There was some confusion with my information. We had consulted the Andaman administration, but the hon. member says that they have not been consulted. I will certainly look into this aspect.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Don't do justice in consultation only.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : No, certainly not, Professorsahib. I will go into this.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : What was the comparative draft last year and this year ?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : Normally the maximum draught is 24' on the Calcutta Port. About last year I know. But this time it has gone down in this particular stretch of the river. I am reviewing the situation. I had talked to the hon. member before he entered the Parliament House. I will certainly see that his problems are solved.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Though he has not replied fully to my question I would like to know whether the similar DWT tonnes draught vessels have been stopping at Calcutta Port or only the passenger vessels. This has not been replied. However, I am now asking my second supplementary that he has said due to more siltation during November-December vessels coming to Calcutta Port have been suspended. In view of this, how are you proposing to continue this service in the entire year because lean months are ahead—January, February, March, April and May ; these will be the lean months. The water level will be much more reduced then. That means it will be a permanent phenomenon and you will not be able to run vessels to Calcutta Port ; if so, it will be a very alarming situation. So, for goods and passenger traffic and for all other purposes, we are already trying to open another Port that Vizag so that it facilitates passengers from the other side. That also we have started. But this is a very crucial matter. What is the draught of *MV Andaman* and what is the draught of other vessels like we have got two small vessels ? *Chola* and *Sentinel*, whether those ships can be diverted due to urgency and whether the Minister is going to take action on these lines.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : As for the period he has mentioned, the period expected is to go up to the end of December or 10th or 15th of January. During monsoon, we have no problem, because during the monsoon the draught increases. We are dredging on this particular portion and we are paying attention and as the hon. Member has asked about the lighter vessels, we are trying smaller vessels. Because *Andaman* and *Akbar* are slightly heavier, they carry 1500 to 1600. *M.V. Andaman* carries roughly somewhere 750 passengers.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : No. Five hundred and fifty passengers are carried by *M.V. Andaman*.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : That is, they must be the actual number of passengers, but the capacity is 750 passengers, from to be precise, for the information of the hon. Member. He may be travelling, he must have known the tickets sold on that day.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : I have been travelling, all my life on that ship.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : He is your friend. You must accept his advice.

AN HON. MEMBER : You are not properly briefed by the Secretary.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Let the Minister put the question and he will answer.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : Anyway, we are also spending, in case Calcutta Port silts, and our technical information is there, we are trying however to divert to Haldia which is 70 km from there. We will make sure that the people coming from Andaman and Nicobar do not suffer.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : I seek protection, Sir. I asked a question, what is the draught of *M.V. Andaman*.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Twenty.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : What is the draught of *Chola* and *Sentinel* ?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : I do not have the exact information what the draught of *M.V. Andaman* and of these vessels he has mentioned, is. I will supply the information to the hon. Member.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Hardly 20 feet.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : In the initial reply the hon. Minister referred to the inadequacy of the draught and said that it is the cause of the temporary suspension of the service. Then that does not fit in with your Ranchi theory. That is something else. You could have a service from Andaman to Visakhapatnam, we do not mind. This is not the excuse that is being given in your answer. If it is a question of draft only, you say so. You have not chosen to reply why the other vessels which are not carrying the passengers are able to come. This has not come in your reply. I would like to know whether it is due to the insistence that there should be round 2.5 trips, and that is why to facilitate and additional half way journeys, one way journey, that this has been caused; that this decision has been taken. If there are two return journeys the draught was adequate, because the timelag would be sufficient for the purpose of making two round trips, because you have decided 2.5 that causes the difficulty. Before you took that decision, you did not consult anybody. Why the Andaman and Nicobar Government, and west Bengal State Government, were not consulted and the Shipping Corporation of India, they were really compelled to take this action because of the non-cooperation of the Calcutta Port Trust. The Government of India and the Port Trust took a decision and foisted it on the Shipping Corporation and they had to take a decision.

I want to know whether that is the real cause and not the draught or the Ranchi people. Is it a fact that the Shipping Corporation of India itself suggested that they are in a position to run the service from Ha'dia to Andaman and whether that recommendation of the Shipping Corporation of India has been rejected by the Calcutta Port Trust, the present Chairman of the Calcutta Port Trust, and if so, I would like to know whether the Government of India would like to look into the matter, whether Haldia can be an alternative port during the lean months and what steps you are taking to bring Diamond Harbour as an alternative ?

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : I am reminded of Julius Caesar's words ;

[English]

et tu, Brute.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : I am the President of the Union. I have to go to the people.

The Shipping Corporation says, "What can we do, it is the CPT decision." CPT says it is Delhi decision and the Minister is governed by whom, I do not know.

You please come there once, we shall entertain you and you see for yourself. You will be most welcome there.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : So far as the first part of the question is concerned, what my logic says and what I feel about it I cannot be very correct on this—is that there are separate criteria for passenger ships and separate criteria for cargo ships. I would not be authentic on this. But these are the facts. I think, normally a passenger ship has more technical requirements like draught and other things which are not required for

cargo vessels. (Interruptions) I just said that this could be one of the reasons. Before this thing came upto me I did appreciate that if vessels could be brought to Haldia, as the hon. Member has pointed out—on the same line we have today itself asked them—that given the traffic of cargo to be manipulated and to be accommodated at Haldia, it should be done but the people from Andaman & Nicobar should be given priority. So, on this we are on the job. About the real cause, whether it is because of SCI and other people, you have better information.

Break Down of Cranes at Kandla Port

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*449. DR. V. VENKATESH :

SHRI ATISH CHANDRA
SINHA :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Kandla Port Trust had placed orders for supply of three heavy cranes to an Indian firm having collaboration with a foreign company a few years back ;

(b) whether one of the three cranes which was on test operation broke down due to technical deficiencies on or about 12 June, 1986 causing injury and damage ;

(c) if so, the facts thereof ; and

(d) the remedial steps proposed ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE
MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT
(SHRI RAJESH PILOT) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) On 12 h June, 1986, when the crane was being operated by the personnel of the contractor in charge of erection of the crane, a part of the crane sustained some damage. No injury was caused to any person. According to preliminary reports, the mishap occurred because of attempts by the personnel of