

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, March 20, 1968/Phalgun
30, 1889 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

FREE PORT FACILITIES FOR NEPAL
GOVERNMENT

*718. SHRI D. N. PATODIA : Will
the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Gov-
ernment of Nepal have renewed their
request for free port facilities at Cal-
cutta; and

(b) if so, the decision taken in the
matter ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH) :
(a) and (b). Government have nothing
further to add beyond what was stated
in answer to part (a) of the Starred
Question No. 422 in the Lok Sabha on
December 4, 1967.

If the House so desires, I can read
out the answer given to Question 422.

SHRI D. N. PATODIA : Unfortu-
nately, the answer does not meet my
question. There had been recently a
new demand put forward by the Nepalese
delegate in UNCTAD Conference
that the existing facilities which are
being provided are not adequate and
certain difficulties are still being faced
by them. In view of that, they demanded
that free port facilities should speci-
fically be given to Nepal. May I know

in that context what were the difficul-
ties pointed out by the Nepalese dele-
gate and in what respect free port faci-
lities are in excess of the facilities already
being provided by the Indian Govern-
ment ?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH : It
is true that from time to time some
spokesmen of the Nepalese Government
have come out with the demand some-
times for free port facilities and some-
times for special jetties to be reserved
for Nepalese goods. Our position is
that whatever facilities we have given
to Nepal are quite adequate in relation
to the volume of their trade. We do
not think they are inadequate.

SHRI D. N. PATODIA : My ques-
tion was, what were the difficulties
pointed out by the Nepalese delegate
and in what respect the demand for
free port facilities exceeds the existing
facilities already being given to them ?

THE PRIME MINISTER, MINIS-
TER OF ATOMIC ENERGY, MINIS-
TER OF PLANNING AND MINIS-
TER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI) :
While we want to help the Nepalese in
every way we can, the help we have
already given is fully adequate with re-
gard to the volume of their trade, as
pointed out by the Deputy Minister.
At the UNCTAD the land-locked coun-
tries made a general demand that spe-
cial facilities should be given to them
for trade. Our position is that certainly
this can be looked into but this should
be according to mutual convenience,
availability of space and so on.

With regard to what is already being
placed at the disposal of the Nepalese
Government, there are three sheds. If
the House likes, I can give the area.
But the point is, together these three
sheds now contain only about 220
tonnes of cargo, whereas they can
accommodate more than hundred times

that. If there is any kind of inconvenience caused to Nepalese traders, it is the same sort of inconvenience as may be caused to Indian traders in the same area...

SHRI RANGA : The question is whether any effort is being made to remove those inconveniences.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI : When anything is brought to our notice, certainly we look into it, but there is no difficulty in the amount of space available. We learn from the Port Commissioner's report that Nepalese cargo of about 26,000 bales of jute has been lying in the port area outside the Nepalese sheds and sometimes this causes difficulties to others. Having a special jetty or a free port would mean that a lot of area would be rendered useless for Indian cargo without specially helping the Nepalese in any way.

SHRI D. N. PATODIA : May I know whether in accordance with the Algiers Charter India is meeting all the requirements needed to be given to land-locked countries ?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH : The facilities that Nepal is getting under the bilateral arrangement are far in excess of what she would be getting under any international convention or agreement.

SHRI D. N. PATODIA : In that case, is it true that the demand for free port facility is being pressed now in view of the Algiers Charter ?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH : As I said, this demand for a free port has come from Nepal over and over again, but they themselves are not clear about the demand and they are not clear as to what they want. Again, as I said, their trade is of a very small order and that does not justify a free port.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI : May I add, Sir, that these warehouses are rent-free. Any other facility which may be found necessary can certainly be considered. We can discuss these matters between us because our relations are very friendly.

SHRI BEDABRATA BARUA : In view of our very delicate relationship with Nepal I do not like to mention where they get their jute from because Nepal does not herself grow any jute. Is it a fact that a lot of Nepal's trade is processed through India ? Nepal's trade with China is processed through India. May I know whether that matter has been taken up at UNCTAD ? May I also know whether Nepal has requested that type of facility also in relation to trade with Pakistan ?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH : I have no knowledge.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI : It might have been mentioned as part of the questions raised about land-locked countries.

SHRI HEM BARUA : Sir, there is flourishing smuggling in this part of the country. Chinese goods are smuggled to India through Nepal. Then, you know, there is an extensive market for Chinese goods in Eastern India at present smuggled to Nepal. Then, paddy is being smuggled from Calcutta to Nepal and from Nepal to China. Is it the reason or is it a fact that because of this smuggling the Government are unwilling to give additional port facilities to Nepal at present ?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI : No, Sir. I have already explained our views regarding additional port facilities. As far as smuggling is concerned, naturally, it is a matter of concern to us and we have mentioned it to them separately.

CORPORATION FOR A.I.R.

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*719. **SHRI PREM CHAND VERMA :**
SHRI S. C. SAMANTA :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Informal Consultative Committee of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry was of the firm opinion that A.I.R.