

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Thirteen Minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA BILL -- *Contd.*

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri Basudeb Acharya may continue.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura): Sir, I was pointing out that the bad maintenance is only due to inadequate allocation of funds and as a result of bad maintenance the road standards have also deteriorated, and the bad roads not only lead to some optimal utilisation of road system. but also add to vehicle operation cost. Yesterday I told that Rs. 300 crores could be spent if the roads are brought to the standard. By spending Rs. 500 crores, some of the roads could be brought to standard, at least some important roads; where the traffic is very much there, those rail-roads can be brought to the standard. Also the accidents are increasing. 36,000 lives are lost every year due to road accidents because of the bad condition of roads.

(*Interruptions*)

Another important aspect is being neglected by the Research and Development (R&D). There is one Institute attached to the Ministry of Surface Transport. But this is quite inadequate. Most of the States do not have any laboratories. So, there is a necessity of decentralisation of research system. There should be some zonal laboratories, say 5 or 6 zonal laboratories, one each for Eastern zone, Southern zone, Northern zone, Western zone, Northeastern zone etc. These research laboratories can help in technical upgradation for better utilisation of local materials and for improving the standard of the roads and the capacity of the roads. Enough funds should be allocated for research and development and they should be decentralised.

Most of the bridges have crossed their lift time and these bridges were constructed

long back when there was no so much of traffic. So, bridges need immediate repair and some of the bridges should be brought to the standard where vehicular traffic is too much. So, the aspect of condition of bridges, repair of bridges, bringing these bridges to the standard should also be looked into and financial allocation should be made for repair of bridges.

Though the maintenance of national highway should get top priority, construction of new highways should not be neglected, as National Transport Policy Committee have identified 37 routes. So, the Minister should tell this House, out of 37 routes, how many routes so far have been taken over or the scheme has been approved and construction has been started. It is to the length of 13,000 kms. There are a number of areas, where there are no railway lines. Yesterday, I had told, some parts of Northeastern States, parts of Madhya Pradesh, parts of Orissa are not connected by roads or rail and some new schemes, new national highway should be taken up to connect the inaccessible areas, hilly areas and forest areas. In my State, the National Transport Policy Committee recommended two roads, Asansol-Kharagpur and another from Kharagpur-Balasore between West Bengal and border of Orissa. This will connect Kharagpur with Orissa. So, please tell us whether these roads as recommended by NTPC for West Bengal have been taken up. There is another important route, in my State which will connect the headquarters of the backward district Bankura with Durgapur which is an industrial town. This route is also recommended by the State Government to take over as a national highway, considering increase in the traffic and the importance of the area which connects backward district with industrial town, which will help develop that area in industrialisation. In our country, road traffic is very much important because new railway lines are not being constructed because of the constraint of funds. There are a number of pending projects and new railway lines are not being constructed. Even the State capitals are not connected with railway lines, particularly, in Northeastern region where most of the State capitals are not connected by rail.

Most of the District Headquarters in other areas are not connected with railway lines. This road transport is very vital and important. It is an infrastructure. It will help to develop the backward areas. It will help for industrialisation of that area. Economic activities will be increased. So, this sector should not be neglected. Again I reiterate that the present system is working well. None of the Committees has said anything against the present agency system. The only bottleneck is the constraint of funds and the allocation of finance. This present system should continue and this Ministry should approach the Planning Commission to allocate more funds, if necessary, during the Eighth Five Year Plan. If it is necessary, they can have Finance Corporation to collect money, to issue bonds and that money because we also supported it when a resolution was moved in this particular House. We were assured that 5% of the cess money will be utilised for the development, maintenance, modernisation, widening and construction of new national highways.

With these words, I conclude and I oppose this Bill.

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 SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI (Bellary): I support the National Highway Authority of India Bill, 1988. This Authority has been constituted to maintain the existing highways and to construct new highways. As on today, these have been constructed and maintained by the State Government. Communications as on today play an important role in the all-round development and the economy of this country. This Authority has been constituted to borrow money to receive grants and also to find money to take up such huge functions and duties as laid down in this Bill.

At the time of constituting this Authority, I would like to make a few suggestions to the hon. Minister. Care should be taken to find persons from the Land Army Department. Land Army is doing very good work. They are not profit-oriented. Moreover, their work is not sub-standard and if encouragement is given, I think they will come forward to take up this huge work. Persons from the Land Army,

Housing Engineering Association, Automobile Association and the Forest Department should be placed on the Board.

My suggestion would be to have shady trees on either side of the road. Our forefathers have taken care to plant shady trees on the roads. You can still find shady trees on the roads. At the time of travel, you find the difference on a road which is having shady trees and the lonely road. Therefore, hereafter whenever we take up this highway, we must take it up as a duty to plant trees on either side of the road and the trees should be protected and grown. They should be grown so as to provide shade to the passengers and in that event it would be a pleasure to travel by such roads. Therefore, I would suggest that persons from the Land Army, Engineering Association, Automobile Association and also the Engineering Experts along with the Forest Officer should constitute the Board.

Sir, many hon. Members have spoken about the condition of the roads. After heavy rainfall, due to breach of tanks & nallas, in many parts of our country most of the highways or State roads need repair work. They are not at all in good condition. How have we to repair the roads? The State Governments do not have sufficient money even to fill up the pot-holes. The National Highways are also in worst conditions. I hope the present Authority is going to do some good service by collecting money. I hope that they will maintain the road in a good condition, as they have stated.

Sir, I have gone through the Statement of Objects and Reasons and also the functions of the Board. They are very much appreciable. At the time of taking up its function, I would request the hon. Minister that care should be taken to put up hotels motels, restaurants, bath-rooms and telephone etc. Even, I would suggest that first-aid should also be provided. Further, whenever it is necessary we should have clearing equipment also. So many times, accidents take place. Sometimes, the old trees fall on the roads because of natural vagaries. It takes weeks together to clear

[Shrimati Basavarajeswari]

such trees and in some cases, due to accidents, longer time is taken to clear the vehicles involved in the accidents. Therefore, there should be emergency equipment so as to clear the blocked roads. As I have stated earlier, first-aid equipment should also be provided in the accident sites to attend to the injured persons immediately. In most of the cases, the people injured in accidents die before they are brought to the hospitals. If they reach in time, such people's life can be saved. So, we should have such equipments wherever they are necessary and whenever we find such facilities we can provide for helping the passengers who travel by these roads.

Sir, there are various types of Cesses which are being collected. I come from an area where mining activities are going on in a large scale. I came to know very recently that the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation are collecting some welfare cess and the same money again goes to the State Governments. But, if you look into the roads where such mining activities are going on, you can find not even a single improvement. I mean, the entire amount is meant for the welfare of the mining labourers who are working in such mines. But the money which has been earmarked and collected is not being utilised properly. You take it as a welfare cess. But these Cesses are not being used for the purpose for which they have been collected.

So, at the time of collection of the Cess, care must be taken to see that the amount which is collected through this process should be spent exclusively for the purpose for which it has been collected. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to see that instead of transferring the entire amount to the State Governments, the Authority should take care of such a Cess wherever the Central Government is entitled to collect and see that proper maintenance is done. This is one suggestion which I would like to make in this House.

Another thing is that - whether you find it here or not, I think the hon. Deputy

Speaker knows about this very recently I am seeing that harvesting work is being done on the roads. It gives room to accidents.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Yes, it is very dangerous.

SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI: Several vehicles pass through the roads. At the same time, even thresher machines are being put on the roads; tractors are put on the roads. Such equipments are very often used by the farmers and the whole national highways are being utilised for the harvesting purpose. I do not know where we stand? How can we maintain the roads, if such things are happening? How long we can continue to do this? Therefore, I request the hon. Minister that this aspect has to be considered. I think he is going to regulate such things. The hon. Minister has to take into consideration all such things. When I mention about this aspect, I am not against farmers. They are making use of these roads in order to preserve the land from being used for this purpose. They are finding it difficult to provide the land for harvesting purpose.

Especially some grains like Safflower or other plants are harvested, you can see the amount of dust which the passenger is to swallow. Therefore, sometimes, so many accidents also take place. While running the vehicle, if there is any fuel-mix smoke or some other flame is there, the whole hay gets burnt and the vehicle also gets burnt. Therefore, this has to be taken care of at the time of regulating the highway traffic. This is one of the major points that I would like to emphasise.

Another thing is, the Hon. Minister had laid down the foundation stone for the construction of Hougari Bridge in my constituency three years back. Till now, I have not heard from the Hon. Minister anything. That is a bridge which connects the district headquarter with other parts of the city. But if that is not being completed - already it is in a bad shape - motor vehicles cannot move. Everyday people are quarrelling about who is to go first and who is to go second. In that way, things are

going in a very bad shape. I hope, the Hon. Minister has finalised the whole thing. I think, he is going to commence the work as early as possible.

Secondly, I came to know that the national highway is going to be constructed between Sholapur in Maharashtra and Karwar in Karnataka via Bellary. I do not know when the Minister is going to start such a highway as this is going to be economically very viable highway. I hope the Minister will certainly take steps.

Another thing is, I have been seeing in the Assembly that taxes are being collected at the time of construction of bridges at the rate of Rs. 5 for heavy vehicles and Rs. 2 for small vehicles. Whenever a new bridge is constructed, I think, the State Government has been empowered to collect such fees until the entire amount which they have spent is remitted. Therefore, if you can take this into consideration and see that wherever such bridges are constructed you also collect tax, you can also recover that amount. I think, people will not hesitate to pay that amount because instead of being put into lot of inconvenience at the time of heavy rainfall and so on and so forth, you can put a bridge over these nalas and you can collect such taxes, if necessary. Already, State Governments are doing that. In our State also, we have enacted that Act for small vehicles, they are collecting at the rate of Rs.2 per day and for heavy vehicles at the rate of Rs. 5 per day and the whole amount which they have spent is re-imbursed. Now they have withdrawn collecting taxes also.

As you are aware, the standard of road very much deteriorating and corruption is mounting. We do not have any proper method to check this sub-standard work. Hereafter, whenever you spend crores of rupees for the construction such highways, you should have proper vigilant squad at least in district or divisional headquarters so that at the time of construction, care can be taken to see that the work is of standard and no corruption is taking place. When we have witnessed that a bridge in Goa has collapsed. I am very much convinced. If such things are going to continue, I do not know where we will stand. Taking that

experience into consideration, we should try to have some vigilant squad to check and supervise these things.

Whenever we come across people, they will grumble and say: "look here, they have not done anything and still they have drawn money. At the time of farming they have to put some mud but now they are denying it." All these complaints are coming. When we take up such work, such complaints should also be heard by the competent authority. You should not neglect the public. They know very well what is going on at the grassroot level or at the site level. If such complaints are not taken care of, the same thing which has been going on will repeat itself.

With these words I appreciate this step and hope the Hon. Minister is going to involve himself for creating many facilities for the all round development of the country and the passengers who are paying taxes will get the benefit.

SHRI N. TOMBI SINGH (Inner Manipur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I support and welcome this very important Bill. I should say that this is a historic step. During the last four decades, the Central Government and also the entire travelling public had experienced different grades of performance on the national highway sector. I don't think it is reasonable that some Members should feel or some State Governments get offended or hurt by this Bill.

There are different conditions, situations and climates in different regions. The cost of construction material, the quality of soil, the ecology, the cost of labour and the standard of efficiency, all these differ from State to State and it must be a problem for the Government of India to keep a uniform construction and maintenance standard in so far as national highways are concerned. The public has been expecting that some such historic step should be taken. So, it is a welcome step.

While supporting this Bill I have a few suggestions to make. As the Minister has in the last session while replying to a question admitted that the present length of the

[Shri N. Tombi Singh]

national highways is not sufficient, the number of national highways should be increased and the existing highways should be widened. The construction should be made of a higher standard. The increase in the number of vehicles in the whole country today is posing a problem to the existing length and breadth of the State highways as well as the National highways. In order to match up with the demand posed by such increasing number of vehicles, we should see that not only highways are increased but also the existing highways are widened.

As far as accidents are concerned, in some of the highways, particularly in the hilly areas, we have seen that a number of blind corners are causing the major accidents. In the hilly areas beginning from Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh upto the rest of the Sub Himalayan States in the north east the highways run in a very zig-zag way and the drivers have to manipulate too much and have to operate with difficulty to overcome the number of blind curves. In order to remove these blind corners, the roads have to be not only widened but also to be extended. The extension should be done once and for all. It is not to be done every year. There are blind corners in the hilly areas from Guwahati to Shillong; Dimapur to Imphal in Manipur; Silchar to Imphal and then to Mizoram; similarly the highways in the Himalayan areas. These blind corners will have to be removed. There may be some extra cost; but these costs will not have to be met every year. We have to do it once and for all.

14.39 hrs.

[SHRI VAKKOM PURUSHOTHAMAN *in the Chair*]

When I took part in the debate during the last session on the Vehicles Bill, I had made a few suggestions for the construction and maintenance of highways, particularly in the eastern sector of the country. The Siliguri portion of the highway which connects the mainstream and the eastern part of the country including Assam is a very

heavy traffic area and we should provide alternate road to it. The present road is very badly damaged due to repeated floods. Progress in the movement of vehicles is very slow. In order to remove this bottleneck this should be attended to.

The other point I would like to make is that the North-Eastern State capitals are not linked up by the railways. The roadways are the life-line of these areas. Naturally the pressure on the national highways is very heavy. So I suggest in respect of the national high-ways connecting the mainland with the State capitals there should be a fresh look to the number and the condition of the national highways of the hilly States particularly that of Manipur. I had earlier suggested for Manipur there should be another national highway linking Imphal from some part of Assam. Similar consideration may be made for the State of Mizoram too.

Another suggestion I would like to make is that national highways in the hilly areas suffer in most of the cases from frequent land-slides. In order to avoid land-slides when we construct national highways we should see that upper portion of the highways should have a firm policy of afforestation. National highways have been constructed since British days. Lot of jungles were cleared from time to time to meet the temporary needs and now there is absolutely barren land. This enhances the chances of number of land slides. In order to stop land slides on the national highways we should have firm policy of afforestation of the upper portions of the national highways on the hilly areas. It does not require extra funds but there would be annual expenditure in respect of maintenance of afforestation areas. In order to maintain certain level of safety on highways the national highways may be provided with afforestation.

The other aspect is that National Highways Authority is being constituted with two categories of members -- permanent members and part-time members. I do not know. This is only a loud thinking. Government seems to take over the responsibility of construction and

maintenance of national highways from the State Governments. I think the State Governments should be somehow represented may be once a year when the annual financial estimates are passed for the authority. The State Government representatives should be associated with the passing of the budget because the national highways run through the States. They have all along been taking care of it in some States, I should say, not very satisfactorily and in some States, very satisfactorily. But in any case, the States have been associated. They have gained experience. They have all the information. Naturally, in the constitution of the National Highways Authority, the representation of the State Government should be considered. Because we don't have many Members even in the part-time category, it would not be possible to accept the representation of all the State Governments. We may suggest that the National Highways Authority should associate at least in the annual meeting to pass the financial estimates of the Authority. This is one consideration.

When particularly a national highway runs straight and wide for a long distance, the safety measures have to be enhanced. We have seen that the number of accidents is increasing every day on the national highways.

In my north-eastern areas, very small bridges — either due to the inefficiency of the agencies there or through basic or good reasons — have taken so many years for implementation and completion. I would mention on a national highway running from Dimapur to Morey, Imphal-Burma road and, similarly, some bridges on the Silchar-Imphal road. I will also mention that Lilong, Thonbal, Senapati, Karong are very small river bridges on the National Highways in Manipur. But the construction of these bridges has taken more than eight years. Now the National Highways Authority will take over. I feel that the construction of these bridges will be hastened.

Even the taking over will be in phases. This again is something which is intriguing.

I hope the Minister will kindly spell out taking over in phases means what. In how many phases? Then, which regions will be covered in the first phase, which regions in the second phase and so on? How quickly the take-over will be complete? As I have mentioned, the North-Eastern area should be taken in the first phase. It should be given priority because the weaknesses of the State Governments' executing agencies are already too well known.

I support this Bill. With these few words, I conclude.

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN (Kishanganj): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I regard the Bill as a welcome step forward because the national highways, are like railways, the arteries of the nation, of its economic life. They are a national responsibility. They have been a national responsibility from the financial angle.

Now, it is proposed that they should also become the administrative and the executive responsibility of the Central Government. For a national institution like the national highways, this step does not constitute, in my view, an encroachment on the rights of the States. The agency system has functioned well sometimes, very badly sometimes, depending upon the situation, the personnel, the interest of the State Government and so on. The fact of inadequacy of a location has also been there. Lack of technical expertise at the State level sometimes, frequency of transfers, have also been mentioned.

It is always difficult to run a diarchal system. Dual control requires a very special finesse to operate and I think this experiment has not been very successful at least from the limited experience that we have of the maintenance of national highways in Bihar.

Sir, I would like to inform you the National Highways which were damaged in the floods in July-August, 1987 are still lying unrepaired and I do not hold the Central Government responsible for it because when I asked the question to the Hon. Minister in the last Session I was informed

[Shri Syed Shahabuddin]

that the State Government, the State PWD, was yet to submit estimates for it. Sir, obviously this state of affair cannot be permitted to go on. National Highways are far too important for this lackadaisical and non-uniform approach. Therefore, Sir, I basically support the Bill and I feel that the construction of new highways and the maintenance, repair, upgradation, renovation of the existing highways must come under a uniform control so that there can be full accountability and we can hold the Hon. Minister responsible for the state of affairs right here in this House.

Sir, I would like to raise a question about the criterion for declaration of particular road as a National Highway. I know that is the subject of the 1956 National Highways Act. Unfortunately the Act does not lay down any particular criterion. Over the years, of course, we have developed certain conventions about which roads are to be considered important enough to be regarded as National Highways and to be taken over as National Highways. There have been frequent wranglings in this House and many complaints have been voiced here about this or that road proposed by various States not having been taken up as expeditiously as they should have been. I, therefore, suggest, Sir, that the Hon. Minister should clearly lay down the purpose and the scope of the national highways. For example, it can be said that all metropolitan cities, all centres of burgeoning economic activities, all State Capitals Cities with Municipal Corporation must be brought on the map of the National Highway. Once this is done, then I would suggest that the Hon. Minister should put before us and before the country a perspective plan for the development of national highway, say, for the year 2000 A.D. then whenever any request will come in from the State then his task would be much easier. He has just to see as to whether the particular request fits into the national perspective plan for the development of national highways.

Sir, at any given time you would naturally be faced with the paucity of resources. A

question still remains as to which highways are taken up first and which should be taken up later. If I may suggest a criterion for the consideration of the Hon. Minister, the states which in the light of the perspective plan has a lower ratio of the actual to the desirable must receive priority.

SHRI BIPIN PAL DAS (Tezpur): Would you please repeat this?

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN: What I suggested was that once we have got a national perspective plan, then we know precisely by the year 2000 how many miles or how many KMs will there be in a given area. Obviously, the areas which as of today have a lower ratio of actual to this target must receive priority because one of the objectives of planning is always to reduce disparity in every sphere of economic activity.

Sir, I come to the question of management. I feel that the time will come when for the protection of the national highways you would require to institute something of the type what is called in USA a Highway Patrol System, just as the Railways have finally developed a system of protection force which is called CRPF exactly in the same manner I think you must apply your mind to the question of constitution of a Highway Patrol. That patrolling system will naturally look into not only the vigilance and security aspects, but also the points made by the hon. members about clearing up the debris of accident, about taking note of any corrective steps that are required and so on.

In Section 16 (2) (d), the Bill speaks of regulation and control of vehicle movement. I imagine that this means only the introduction of some sort of a toll system, which is welcome, and I hope this does not amount to creating a separate and additional licensing or permit system. I hope the hon. Minister will clarify this point.

Sir, there are a large number of proposals pending for construction of by-passes and railway flyovers. Sometimes we are told that the State Governments have

Authority

not done their homework, or they have not signed the necessary agreements, or they have not fulfilled the necessary pre-conditions, etc. And there, we are lost in these wranglings between the Railway Ministry and the Department of Surface Transport and the State Government. I feel that if it is a question of a railway flyover in order to provide expeditious passage to the vehicles on the national highways, it is a matter exclusively and only between the Railways and the Ministry of Surface Transport. It has nothing to do at all with the State Government. You want the traffic on the national highway to move faster and there is the Railway line which comes as an impediment. It is a matter to be sorted between the Railways and Highway Authority now. It has nothing to do with the State Government.

Similarly, if you feel that in a particular section of the national highway, you need a by-pass in order to expedite the traffic, after all the *raison d'être* for a national highway is to have rapid movement, is to accelerate the economic movement, then if you are creating a by-pass for making the highway more useful, more effective, then in that case again, where does the State Government come in? It only comes in for peripheral purposes to help you and cooperate with you in terms of acquiring land and so on and so forth. Otherwise, the entire construction, the entire engineering, the entire supervision is exclusively the responsibility rather should be exclusively the responsibility of the Ministry of transport and now of this Highway Authority. Therefore, I hope that with this clarification, we should be able to improve our performance in the field of construction of by-passes and flyovers and thus speed up traffic.

I would only like to quote the hon. Minister when he said that while the highways constitute only 2 percent of the mileage, they serve 33 percent of the traffic. These simple data are adequate to explain the importance of expediting the movement system.

Sir, I have one or two more points where I feel that the Bill is slightly deficient. On

the question of composition of the Authority, I agree with the hon. member who preceded me that there should be some State representation. Maybe, all the States cannot be represented at the same time and obviously they cannot be. Then perhaps, they can take turns and one State at least for each region of the country can be represented as a part-time member on this National Highway Authority because I think we need their advice and cooperation.

Also, the Bill is absolutely silent about the qualifications of the members. I feel that the Highway Authority which is conceived as a technical body should have people with special expertise on it, people who have professional as well as legal expertise, who are expert engineers, who are financial wizards and who have got some commercial experience.

AN HON. MEMBER: No politicians?

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN: Well, I cannot tell this Government. Because I know, even if my party comes to power, they will put some politicians on it.

So, I cannot argue against politicians -- one politician or two perhaps; but basically it should be a technical body.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): If your Government is going to have them, you can tell us about that also. No problem.

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN: People with financial, legal, commercial and obviously technological expertise should be placed there.

Finally, I come to this question of resources, the all-important question of resources, many plans that we have, and how many dreams that we have, finally flounder on shoals of inadequacy of resources. It is indeed pathetic that while the hon. Minister tells us that simply to bring the existing system to the desired standard, merely for this upgradation he requires at least Rs. 500 crores if not more, I find that in the entire current five-year Plan,

[Shri Syed Shahabuddin]

the allocation for the national highways is of the order of about Rs.1250 crores. I think this is terribly inadequate, particularly with the costs giving up. I wish we could have some cut-back in many other areas of optional activity which are not of immediate consequence to the economy of the nation. And sometimes they are wasteful, and sometimes they cater to the interests of the elite only. Let us cut back on those expenditures, and let us invest in this economic lifeline of the country.

Therefore, I plead through you with the Government, in aid and support of my friend Mr. Rajesh Pilot for a higher allocation for the national highways systems. With these words, I support the Bill.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA (Balasore): Sir, I am very grateful to you for allowing me to participate in this very useful debate on the National Highways Authority of India Bill, 1988. Before participating in the debate and presenting my views on this issue, I must congratulate the hon. Minister that he, with his great wisdom, has brought this Bill which was much awaited.

This Bill will abolish the dual system and also the agency system. What we have seen is that the national highways nowadays have become a nobody's land. Whenever we demand here for improvement of this patch of road, or that patch of road, the Union Government replies that it is under the administrative control and execution of the State Governments. Whenever we approach the State Governments, they say we should ask the Union Government to allocate more funds. So, this is going on.

In this connection, I must congratulate the hon. Minister who has realized the difficulties of the road communications system in our country, specially the national highways which should be of the highest standard. But unfortunately, the Vohra Committee in 1983 had pointed out that the present system was permitting a complete lack of financial accountability on the part of the States. Similarly, this dual system is

never seen in any part of the world. We are unique in this respect.

So, this is a very useful Bill. Whatever the hon. Members from the Opposition might say, maybe for the sake of opposition.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: They are also supporting the Bill.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA: Everybody will realize that this dual system and the agency system should be abolished. After this National Highways Authority of India Bill is passed and enacted, I think road safety must be given top priority. Besides, what is happening due to the deteriorating condition of these national highways? Fuel consumption is increasing.

Side-by-side, we are a developing country. When the fuel consumption is more, it means it is a great loss to the national exchequer.

Fortunately, the hon. Finance Minister is here. Today, in the morning, while he was replying to the debate on the price rise, he had given some aspects of the problems. The bad condition of these roads is also contributing much to the price rise as most of the commodities are transported through roads. I would request the hon. Minister of Finance to liberalise his purse while financing for road construction or development of roads, because a major portion of the essential commodities is transported through roads.

While speaking on the Bill, Mr. Madhav Reddi told that the Centre was not exercising its right for the improvement of the roads. How can they exercise their right when the execution is with the State Government and also they are the persons who are to maintain the roads? We have experimented this system in the last 40 years. But in spite of their improvement, we are seeing that the roads, specially the National Highways are going from bad to worse. So, should we wait for another century or so? (Interruptions) So, we should not wait. One provision is there that the National Highways Authority will look to the road safety. It is seen that about 40,500

people were killed in 1.25 lakh accidents in the last four decades; and 70 percent of these accidents are due to human failure, which the hon. Minister will agree with me. But when we passed the Motor Vehicles Bill, we thought that there would be some improvement while issuing licences. etc. But it is with the State Government and they do not pay their due attention to it with the result that the persons of my calibre or my son will get licences because the latter is my son and has applied for issuing driving licences.

So, this is going on. But what we have seen in USSR is this. There even if there is no fault of the driver, whenever he meets with an accident, his licence would be cancelled. Then he will be given a training of six months for driving and two months trial in the field. Then only another licence will be issued to him. But in our country, we do not have so many motor training institutions specially managed either by the State Government or the Centre. So, generally, we issue licences only after giving a few trials for driving a vehicle. I suggest the National Highways Authority should look into these aspects and the Motor Vehicles Act should be rigidly followed while issuing licences.

Some hon. members spoke earlier on the funds to be made available to the National Highways Authority. It is seen that this Authority will get five percent of the cost of diesel, petrol diesel, motor spirit etc., from which 66 percent will go to the States and the remaining 34 percentage might be with the National Highway Authority. It is quite inadequate. The Additional Director General of Roads has just said that about Rs.16000 crores would be required for the improvement of the present system of national highways. So, this is a very meagre amount which will be placed with the Authority, and they cannot do any work with it. There are some provisions in the Bill that they may float loans Bonds etc. But I doubt whether they can collect the required funds through these loans, Bonds etc.

Besides, I note from the statement of objects and reasons, that they will take a

stretch of the roads or the National Highways for development. I do not know which portion or which will be the category of such a stretch of road by the National Highways Authority.

Shri Basudeb Acharia was saying that road communication in his State was very good. In my State of Orissa and many other States road communication system is the worst. So, I must say that, while taking a stretch of road for improvement of the national highway, at least some criteria should be fixed. In this connection, I would suggest that States which are exposed to floods and natural calamities should be given priority. Mr. Tombi Singh was mentioning about the North-Eastern region. Similarly in Orissa and other States also where flood is a regular phenomenon, they should be taken into consideration while taking the first stretch of road for improvement by the National Highway Authority.

Shri Basudeb Acharia was telling about the road from Kharagpur to Balasore. That road, I must say, for the information of the hon. Members, is a portion of the road, which is called as Jagannath Trunk road. It was constructed in East India Company/ time and it was improved in the time of then Queen Victoria. But some portion of it has been converted into National Highway No. 5, and unfortunately the rest of the portion remained neglected after the construction of a bridge over river Subernarekha. which was of course, financed by the Centre by loans. It is being repaired by the State of Orissa and West Bengal. Both of them are maintaining the road. But after the completion of that bridge the entire vehicular traffic is passing through that road and as the specifications of that road are much less than that of a National Highway. So, definitely the condition of that road is deteriorating day by day. I would request the hon. Minister to kindly ensure that portion of the road is taken up as a national highway. This portion of the road is known as MDR 74 in Orissa.

While participating in the debate, Shrimati Basavarajeswari was talking about

[Shri Chintamani Jena]

the passing of tractors and other vehicles through the national highways which spoil the road condition. In this connection, I humbly submit that we should provide more funds. There should be four channel roads; one portion of that road may be left for vehicular traffic used for agricultural purposes and the rest three may be used for other vehicular traffic. I am happy that National Highways Authority is going to take up the work of improving the roads.

I wish and hope that through this Authority, our road system would be improved.

With these words, I support the Bill.

[Translation]

DR. G.S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to say a few things about this Bill. I congratulate the hon. Minister for bringing forward such a good Bill. Since the day I became the Member of this House. I have all along been in favour of the point that all the on going central projects in the States should be executed under the supervision of the Central Government only irrespective of the party to which the Government of the State concerned belongs and these should not be left on the States. I am not against the rights of the States, but the Engineers in the State grab all the funds and we can do nothing except raising the issue in the Parliament. I still say that the working of the Government at the Centre is far better as compared to that of the States and the Engineers working under the Central Government hardly dare to corner all the funds. In several States the P.W.D. men corner 10 percent of the funds. I am not talking of my own state. I am telling about other States. In some States, engineers corner as much as 50 to 60 percent of the funds. As soon as an Engineer enters into Government service, he becomes a 'Maharaja'. The P.W.D. Engineers become modern Maharaja. They indulge in pocketing money with no sense of dishonesty as percentage is fixed for officials

from top to bottom i.e. from Overseer to Superintending Engineer. Even 50 percent of the funds is not spent on Government work.

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV (Nalanda): You have the experience of Bihar.

DR. G.S. RAJHANS: I did not say so. It is a fact that people take it granted that in P.W.D. work 50 percent of the funds is to be cornered and there are instances where 70 percent of the funds has been cornered. The construction of road is under taken with the remaining amount. You may please do only one thing which will cause a lot of welfare for the country. You may please provide a network of roads throughout the country. It will serve many purpose at a stretch. People will get employment on large scale from it. It is a very old theory that if employment is to be generated anywhere, a net work of roads should be provided. As a result There of, many ancillary industries will spring up, stone chips, coaltar factories will come up and consumption of cement will also go up. This will create more employment opportunity to the people. As it is a theory of economics that growth of employment has multiplier effect. If a family gets Rs. 100, the amount will be spent on buying bread, etc. Thus, bakeries will flourish. More people will get employment in it and consequently there will be more money with them which will enable them to purchase other things and it will lead to further productive activities. These activities will provide people still more employment. This will have accelerated effect. Due to this, employment opportunity will be created on large scale.

I urge that a net work of roads be constructed all over the country, leaving other things aside. This will be a great achievement. So far as national highways are concerned, their condition is very bad in Bihar. Just now Prabhawatiji was stating that conditions of roads in her area is extremely bad. There are some other areas too where the condition of national highways is bad. There are many bridges on these roads. Lakhs and crores of rupees are spent in the name of repairs of these

Authority

bridges every year. Where does this all money go. There is no one to look into it. No one has been assigned this responsibility? Money is advanced by the Centre and it is spent by the Engineers of Bihar. It is a good thing that you are going to set up a central authority which will do the entire work.

To my view, the fund sought for this authority is quite inadequate. It should be provided more funds. Your purpose will not be served with this amount. N.T.P.C., Energy Corporation and other corporations have issued debentures or bonds which invoked good response from the public, you should also issue debentures and bonds which may invoke good public response.

But we are facing extreme difficulties due to lack of roads. I urge upon the Government that the amount given to states under 20 point programme for construction of roads should be spent by the centre, it should not be left on State Governments. Many people talk about State Governments. I say it with full confidence that no work is done by the States. If the whole amount is given by the Centre for doing something, the work should be executed and implemented by the Centre. Supervision work should be in the hands of the Centre. How does it sound that money is given by the Centre whereas the work is executed by the State Governments. I have stated this earlier also that crores of rupees have been spent on Kosi Project in Bihar as against its initial estimated amount of Rs. 50-60 crores only. Thousands of crores of rupees have since been spent on it. If a civil work involving an amount of Rs. 10 lakh is to be executed, an amount not more than Rs. 1 lakh or Rs.50 thousand is spent on it and the rest of the sum is pocketed by Engineers and Contractors.

I am of the opinion that if Centre provides funds for a work, then it should supervise the spending also. Powers should be vested in the Centre and not in the States. I do not take it as an intervention in the jurisdiction of States. I do not find any bad thing in it.

15.22 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

When you construct national highways, you should also see that it does not lead to rail-road competition. In the field of transport economy, rail-road competition is a very big thing. You have to see that neither uneconomic buses nor uneconomic trains are allowed to run. Fruitless expenditure should be avoided. There must be co-ordination between the two when the entire responsibility of national highways will rest with you, you will be able to avoid this competition.

There is one more thing. Motels should be constructed at different places along national highways. People travelling on national highways at present face a lot of difficulties in respect of eatables. Therefore, small motels should be constructed along highways. This will also encourage tourism.

In the end, I will say that people do not get full protection on national highways. I agree that this is the responsibility of State Governments. But there should be coordination between Centre and the State Governments so as to provide full security to the people.

[*English*]

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU (Gobichettipalayam): Sir, as far as this Bill is concerned, it is not in the right direction. It is not a justified action on the part of the Central Government to encroach upon the powers of the State Governments. For National Highways, even though an agency system is prevailing between the Centre and the States, but the actual control is with the States. I do agree that the funds are being given by the Central Government but they must be under the control of the States. All of a sudden it should not be taken away by the Centre from the hands of the States by creating an Authority like this. Dual control always leads to cordial relationship between the Centre and the States. Unified control will not have that much of relationship between the States and the Centre. The policy adopted by the

[Shri P. Kolandaivelu]

Central Government is to have better relationship with the States, but by creating an Authority like this, you are taking over almost all the rights of the 32,000 kilometres of roads all over the country under one unified action. I humbly submit that this will lead to a lot of confusion because for constructing a road, you have to acquire the land, and when you approach the State Government for that, they may not yield to your action. This will lead to delay in the construction of new roads. So, instead of having an Authority like this, we should continue to have the agency system under which roads are being constructed. That is a good system. You are paying only nine percent of the work costs to the State Governments as 'Agency Charges'. Nine percent does not mean that it is a commission; you are paying nine percent to meet the expenditure on the overheads. That is all. And each and every single pie is being accounted for to the Central Government. One cannot take away the funds of the Central Government by misusing them for the State Plans. That cannot be done. When such is the case, then why do you come with the proposal for creating of a National Highway Authority of India. I do not know.

Formerly, you were not giving enough funds for the roads. You were giving funds on the basis of the number of kilometres of National Highways that the State was maintaining. How much amount of funds is given by the Central Government for each kilometre, there is no account for it.

As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, the funds have been utilised very well. I was the Minister for Highways in my State - both State Highways and National Highways - and I know fully well that as far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, not even a single kilometre of new road has been constructed as National Highway. You have not allotted any funds.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): You can tell us the facts now.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU: But recently, with the World Bank aid, we have taken up the work on about 100 kilometres of N.H. 45. For that, the World Bank is giving an aid of nearly Rs. 100 crores for widening it, for having four-lane traffic. I would suggest that the standard of National Highways should be of the level of the standard in foreign countries. Our National Highways are of the standard of State Highways. Only two-lane traffic is being allowed. Because of the intensity of traffic, because of more traffic flowing everyday, we have to have four-lane traffic instead of two-lane traffic.

As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, we have already suggested the upgradation of more than sixteen State Highways into National Highways. Not even a single road has been taken up so far. I request the hon. Minister to go into this matter and at least in a phased manner some of the road should be taken up for upgradation. Actually by this policy you are making an inroad into the powers of the State Governments. So, I think this National Highways Authority of India Bill would not be of much help either to the States or to the centre... *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have to take up the Private Members' Business now...

SHRI ATAUR RAHMAN (Barpeta): What about this discussion?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It can be taken up on Monday.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI PRABHAWATI GUPTA (Motihari): We want to speak on it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: On Monday we will take it up again. We cannot do it now.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): On Monday you won't get time because there may be a motion on Bofors!

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Still we may have some time. Don't worry.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will now take up Private Members' Business. Bills for Introduction. Shri V. S. Krishna Iyer.

CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL*
(Amendment of articles 102 and 191)

[English]

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER (Bangalore South): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Constitution of India.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Constitution of India."

The motion was adopted.

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER: I introduce the Bill.

CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL*
(Amendment of article 80)

[English]

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER (Bangalore South): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Constitution of India.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Constitution of India."

The motion was adopted.

SHRI V. S. KRISHNA IYER: I introduce the Bill.

15.32 hrs.

CINEMATOGRAPH (AMENDMENT) BILL*
(Amendment of Section 513)

[Translation]

SHRI V. TULSIRAM (Nagarkurnool): I beg to move that leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Cinematograph Act, 1952.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Cinematograph Act, 1952."

The Motion was adopted.

[Translation]

SHRI V. TULSIRAM: I introduce the Bill.

15.32 1/2 hrs.

CROP INSURANCE CORPORATION BILL*

[English]

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to provide for the establishment of the Crop Insurance Corporation for the purpose of undertaking the business of crop insurance so as to protect the interests of farmers from loss due to unavoidable causes.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for the establishment of the Crop Insurance Corporation for the purpose of undertaking the business of crop insurance so as to protect the interests of farmers from loss due to unavoidable causes."

The motion was adopted.