

181 *Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Amendment Bill* SRAVANA 28, 1914 (SAKA)
Amendment No.2 was put and negatived.

National Highway 182 Amendment Bill

17.59 hrs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS (AMENDMENT)
BILL*

"That the Bill further to amend the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970 and the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980, be taken into consideration."

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE
MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT
(SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): I beg to move—

The motion was adopted.

" That the Bill further to amend the National Highways Act, 1956, be taken into consideration."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House will now take up clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

Sir, with your permission I would like to say a few words while moving the National Highways (Amendment) Bill for consideration and approval.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question:

"That Clauses 2 and 3 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

The activities of the National Highways and other matters connected therewith are governed by the National Highways Act, 1956 (Act 48 of 1956). The total length of the National Highways in the country at present is 33,689 kilometres. though the National Highways network constitute of only two percent of the total road length in the country, they carry over 40 percent of the total traffic.

Clauses 2 and 3 were adopted to the Bill

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

18.00 hrs.

Clauses 1, the Enacting Formula and the long Title were added to the Bill.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MANMOHAN SINGH): I beg to move:

In view of the constraints of budgetary resources and growing requirements of the Highway Sector, there is need to augment resources through mobilization of extra budgetary resources for proper development and upkeep of National Highway system. In this connection, levy of fees for use of notified sections of National Highways would facilitate such augmentation of the resources. The proposal enabling the Government of India to levy fee requires amendment of Sections 7 and 9 of the National Highways Act, 1956.

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted

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** Moved with the recommendation of the President.

[Sh. Jagdish Tytler]

The principle of levying fees is not new as there already exists a provision under Section 7 of the National Highways Act for levy of fees at such rates as may be laid down by Rules made in this behalf for services or benefits rendered in relations to the use of ferries, temporary bridges, tunnels and permanent bridges costing more than Rs. 100 lakhs which were opened to traffic on or after 1.4.1976. This provision is applicable for such bridges till the entire cost of construction and maintenance etc. is recovered. The amount so recovered is ploughed back for the development of National Highway system in the country. The proposed amendment to Section 7 of the Act will enable the Government to levy fees on notified sections of National Highways; the manner and the period for levy of fees will be determined on a case to case basis to be provided under the Rules. The levy of fees on notified sections of roads will enable Government to provide improved or better facilities on the National Highway system. I may also like to inform the honourable House that such levy of fees is in vogue in a number of developed and developing countries.

Section 9 of National Highways Act provides for the framing of rules on matters specified therein. Since the levy of fee on certain selected stretches of National Highways is not covered under the existing provisions, it is necessary to amend Section 9 to provide for framing of rules relating to the rates at which fees for services rendered in relation to the use of National Highways may be levied and the manner in which such fees shall be collected under Section 7 of National Highways Act. It is proposed to amend Sections 7 and 9 accordingly.

Now I commend the Bill to the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill further to amend the National Highways Act, 1956, be taken into consideration."

There are some amendments.

Shri Rajendra Agnihotri - not present.

Shri Rasa Singh Rawat.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer):
I beg to move:

"That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 30th October, 1992." (2)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Girdhari Lal Bhargava - not present

Shri Dau Dayal Joshi.

[Translation]

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI: Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 6th November 1992" (4)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Anna Joshi - not present.

Amendment No.6 - Shri Girdhari Lal Bhargava - not present.

Shri Kashiram Rana.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINIS-
TRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND

DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT) (SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM): Sir, I would like to interrupt for a minute.

I have a request that after this Bill is passed, Half-an-Hour discussion may be taken up. If we can complete this Bill before 7.30 p.m., then instead of going into the other list of business, I request the House to take up Half-an-Hour discussion. Otherwise, we will take Half-an-Hour discussion at 7.30 p.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Kashiram Rana.

[Translation]

SHRI KASHIRAM RANA (Surat): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am sorry to say that I do not support the Amending Bill brought by the hon. Minister to amend the National Highways Act. Presenting the Bill the hon. Minister has said that the length of the national highways have increased considerably today. The main reason for the present day circumstances is that the priorities were not fixed and if they were fixed, then there has been negligence in them. I would like to present some statistics here. The Government spent a sum of Rs. 1481 crore in the Seventh Five Year Plan. While the hon. Minister demanded a sum of Rs. 7850 crore for the development, construction and maintenance of the national highways, a sum of Rs. 2465 crore has been allotted for the purpose. I do not want to confine myself to the Eight Five Year Plan alone. The attention that should have been paid by Government since 1947 to the development of national highways, has not been paid. So, I would like to say that as much priority should have been given to the transportation as we give to agriculture and industry and good arrangement should have been made. Our country is marching ahead towards industrialisation, so it is quite necessary that there should be good national highways for the facility of transportation. But attention was

not paid to it. I would like to tell the hon. Minister that our objective and aim of developing national highways will not be fulfilled merely by bringing a Bill. Therefore, we will have to fix priority for it if we have to expand transportation, and improve the condition of national highways and increase their length. 135 proposals have been received from all States of the country for the Eighth Five year Plan and a proposal for nearly a length of 47556 kms. has also been received for which an expenditure of Rs. 13,349 crore is estimated to be spent while only a sum of Rs. 2467 crore has been allocated for that. It seems that if this way of allocating funds continues, then we will not be able to utilize national highways which we want to utilize for the development of the country. We have to fix priorities for construction of National Highways. We have to pay more attention to it for providing transport facilities and growing industrialisation, in our Five Year Plans.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, secondly, I would like to say that the intentions of the Government in bringing forward this Bill are not good. The Government is going to entrust all responsibilities to the private sector. It seemed that there would be some changes in respect of economic policies in the Bill. A big change is going to take place in the country. The present Bill is an example of the trend of privatization taking place in the country. I would like to say that this Bill has been brought forward here just to give impetus to privatization. The country and its National Highways should be developed. Since we failed to make development and arrange resourced in a proper way we are entrusting it to the private sector. I want to relate the future problem that would crop up after passing of this Bill. It was the same Government when the All India Trucks Association went on strike some days ago. They had made a demand for abolition of Octroi. The Ministers of the same Government had given an assurance to withdraw Octroi from the Union Territory. Therefore, I would like to say

[Sh. Kashiram Rana]

that the Government is shirking its responsibility by inviting the private sector. It shows that the Government is not discharging its responsibility for public welfare and industrial development. It will create difficulties. Management of the highways will be divided. There will be tunnels and bridges on the National Highways. Different agencies will look after their protection. It will create a situation like demand for abolition of Octroi tax and holding strike for the same by truck operators.

Sir, different Octroi posts will be installed in the private sector. With that a situation like abolition of Octroi tax would be created. Therefore, I cannot support it. The main reason is that the Government has not given required priority for the development of national highways. The Government does not intend to discharge its responsibility. It would cause numerous difficulties for the people towards which I would like to draw your attention.

Sir, With the passing of this Bill more and more people will fall victims of corruption. It will belie Government's claim to eliminate corruption. The private sector will collect more toll tax. They will do excess and deteriorate the law and order situation. It will create more corruption. I would like to tell the hon. Minister that the intentions of the Government for bringing forward this Bill are not good because the Government or the hon. Minister has not assessed its onslaughts.

Sir, today the condition of National Highways is very bad. I have told you earlier that many State Governments have demanded construction of National Highways. The Government does not consider them for years for want of funds. That is how National Highways are not developed. As per the figures, today there are National Highways on 33,612 km stretch of roads out of which

6400 kms. are single lane. Accidents occur due to these single lanes. Mostly accidents occur due to bad condition of these single lanes. The Ahmedabad-Bombay National Highway No.8 is an example of it. It is highly congested and heavy traffic runs on it. No National Highway is as congested as it. A heavy traffic runs on it. I am distressed to say that the Government has never considered to convert it into two or four lanes. Recently, the Government had decided to convert the Ahmedabad-Baroda-National Highway, a distance of 120 kms. into four lanes. Sir, the construction work of four laning of the express way, a distance of 120 kms has not been completed even after four years. I received the reply just now. Last week when I asked about it, I was told that there had been a delay for want of funds. They were examining it. Sir, what I mean to say is that the Government has not so far paid any attention to the region where there is a heavy traffic congestion. I would like to make a demand that the proposed express highway from Ahmedabad to Baroda should be extended upto Bombay. But the Government has never made any effort to meet the demand.

Sir, the Government is entrusting Highways to private sectors. The State Governments construct a number of bridges. In Gujarat also toll tax is collected for plying vehicles on bridges which cost more than Rs. 25 lakhs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a list of five members of your party.

SHRI KASHIRAM RANA: Sir, I will conclude within five minutes. Through you, I would like to tell the hon. Minister that this Bill has been brought forwards for the purpose of mobilising resources for National Highways. It seems that the Government is trying to shirk its responsibility by entrusting the Highways to the private sector. Sir, I am not talking of major Highways. I am talking of

congestion. Several years have been spent for the construction of a junction there. I have been asking for it for last three years but no department paid any attention to it. There is a big congestion on the National Highway from 284 to 287 kms. Many agitations have been launched there and several people have died. Even then the Government is not paying attention to it. Today many accidents occur due to lack of proper development of National Highways. Hundreds of people die there. We must develop National Highways. Entrusting all responsibilities to private sector will create a disastrous situation. I have its experience. It would have been good had there been competition. But steadily moving towards privatization will give rise to corruptions and cause excesses. It will create hardship for the people. With these words I oppose the Bill presented by the hon. Minister. I thank you for giving me time to speak.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, Shri Anantrao Deshmukh may speak. I would request the hon. Member to complete in five minutes. There are nine Members to speak from his party.

SHRI ANANTRAO DESHMUKH (Washim): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I will try to be very brief. I will not take more than six or seven minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then, I should have asked you to speak for four minutes.

(Interruptions)

SHRI ANANTRAO DESHMUKH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, while extending my support to this Bill, there are two points on which I want to seek a clarification.

At the outset of his speech, hon. Member has said something about giving the

work to private sector. I see nowhere in this Bill where it has been envisaged that the hon. Minister proposes to give this work to the private sector., it has got a very limited scope. The Government wants to levy certain taxes on a section of National Highways which will be notified later. This is the only scope this Bill has got. There is another thing which the hon. Member has said and that is about this particular section...

[Translation]

SHRI KASHIRAM RANA: Sir, this is the statement in which it has been written that all the highways would be given to private sector.

[English]

SHRI ANANTRAO DESHMUKH: Sir, he is taking my time now. Let me speak.

Therefore, I do not feel that whatever the hon. Member has said stands any stead as far as the consideration of this Bill is concerned.

Sir, as you know, the State Government has also to take up a lot of road works. Therefore, every year they also have to find new avenues to fund their own projects as far as roads are concerned. Every year this problem is becoming very difficult for the State Governments because they do not have any revenues, that is why they have to depend on the Central Government as far as the Central part is concerned. Here I would like to make one suggestion to the hon. Minister. All of us know that you want to augment the resources as far as maintenance and the new works of the National roadways are concerned; we are with you. As far as the Eighth Plan is concerned, you have given priority to the Transport sector; that is why you are making all the provisions which are all right. But as I have said earlier, the States are also finding lot of problems. So, my suggestion is that whatever revenue

[Sh. Anantrao Deshmukh]

you would collect by charging certain section of National Highways in that particular State, this revenue should form part of the Central Road Fund (CRF) and this Central Road Fund allocated to that State should be used for the betterment of National Highways of that State. This is my one suggestion, Sir, where I would like to have a commitment from the hon. Minister.

My second suggestion, Sir, we have adopted a Resolution in this very House on 13th May 1988 wherein we have resolved that 5 percent of the amount accrued by the sale of petrol and diesel, the basic price of these two commodities in their respective States, would form part of the Capital Road Fund and this fund would be given to that particular State as far as the new projects are concerned of the new roads are concerned. Now, Sir, I am sure this problem practically all other states are having because I will just give you an example of the State of Maharashtra. You have written a letter to the State of Maharashtra in 1988 that 'because of the new Resolution which we have adopted, every year the Government of Maharashtra is going to get Rs 40 crores for taking up new roads, the amount occurred in the Central Road Fund.' Time and again the State Government has approached the Central Government that this amount should be released. Since this Resolution was adopted in 1988, four years have elapsed - 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992 - and I am sure that with the rate of Rs.40 crores per year, the outstanding amount, with the Central government of the State Government would be somewhere about Rs. 100 crores to Rs. 120 crores. Time and again this State Government has approached the Central Government for taking up the new works under the CRF, but every time the Central Government has not responded positively to this request. If you go through this Resolution, you will realise that it has

been specifically mentioned that the balance to the credit of Central Road Fund or any allocation thereof shall not lapse at the end of the financial year. That means, this amount has not elapsed though for years have elapsed. So, the amount accrued in the form of the Central Road Fund must be about Rs. 100 crores. This may be the case with all other States. Therefore, my suggestion to the hon. Minister is, now taking all these aspects into consideration, as I have said earlier, all the State governments are finding it very difficult every year to finance the road projects which they have undertaken. As such you have identified the transport as the priority sector in the Eighth Plan; therefore, stress must be given that the amount accrued in the Central Road Fund should be disbursed to these States in the same financial year in which the amount was approved. This is my one suggestion.

The second suggestion which I would like to give to the hon. Minister is that in many instances we have seen as far as the National Highways are concerned that one has to climb the hill and again come down. There is going to be a lot of wastage as far as petrol is concerned, there is going to be a lot of wastage as far as energy is concerned. If you are going to levy these taxes, if these taxes are going to be utilised for making a tunnel, even if you charge any levy on it, I do not think any State Government would have any objection. I will just give you an example — National Highway No. 1.e., from Pune to Satara.

● So, while saying all these things, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to which are the roads he has identified and the sections of the National Highways he has identified wherein he is going to put this new scheme like the placement of toll plazas and other things, which he has envisaged in this Bill. If he could let us know the notified areas, we can tell something about that also.

Therefore, while extending my full support to this Bill, I would like to have a positive assurance from the hon. Minister that the amount accrued in a State on the section of the National Highways will be used for the betterment and maintenance of the national Highways in that particular State only.

[*Translation*]

SHRI SUBRATA MUKHERJEE (Rai-ganj): Mr. Chairman, Sir, there is a great need of expansion of the network of national high ways for the social and economic development of the country but proper attention has not been paid to these national highways. There were 34 thousand buses and 85 thousand trucks during 1950-51 in my region. during the year 1990-91 one crore, 86 lakh and 90 thousand buses were plying and the number of trucks is even more. There is a need for a expanding the national highways in the same proportion or there should be a development of the national highways but attention has not been paid to them. It was very important to pay attention to that but proper attention was not paid.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the construction of link roads for connecting one State with the other is a state subject and the State Governments do not have adequate funds for the maintenance of these roads. There is no such system through which the State governments might get funds for this purpose. The Central Government has not taken the responsibility for construction and maintenance of the national highways, even those has been left on State Governments. The State Governments have also to undertake the work of constructing link roads connecting one State with the other and they have also to do the maintenance work of those roads. The Central Government pays no attention to the maintenance of these roads. The State Governments however, do the maintenance work of national highways but

they do not get the required funds from the Central Government.

Sir, in this regard I would like to cite an example of West Bengal itself. The Central Government has given 400 lakh rupees less than what has been spent on the maintenance work of the national highways during the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.. Similarly, there was a need of 3026 lakh rupees in the State for 1992-93, but only an assurance of 9000 lakh has been given till date. I would, therefore, like to submit that the fund that is allocated to the State Governments is not adequate to meet their requirements. I would therefore, submit that sufficient funds should be provided to each State.

Sir, the issues relating to national highways would be raised on contract basis. It creates doubt on their intention. I would like to submit that it is important to clear it. The hon Minister must pay attention to it and must try to clear it.

I would like to mention that the expenditure thus incurred on it will ultimately have to be borne by the public. although the amount would directly be taken from the bus and truck owners, those owners will ultimately extract money from the general public. In this way it is an indirect tax being levied on the public. It is not proper. I would like to submit that when the burden has to be borne ultimately by the public, why then it should be charged from them indirectly. it should therefore be made a direct tax. People should be taxed directly. The Government is increasing indirect taxes instead of direct taxes. It is putting a additional pressure on the public in a new way It should not be so.

There is a proposal of toll tax in it. A provision has been made in it for collection of toll-tax on a particular part of a national high way. It is improper. There should be a uniform toll tax everywhere.

[Sh. Subrata Mukherjee]

It has also been laid down in your proposal that toll tax may be increased if more than 35 lakh rupees has been spent on the bridges that have been constructed as on April 1976 or after that I think that this is not proper, because it will never be proper to levy toll tax and collect it in commensurate with the expenditure on the construction of bridges.

Upto recently every State was collecting toll tax through its own Octroi system. The Government opposed it. Now the Government has given a new form to it and has brought now a proposal to levy toll tax on national highways. It is something surprising. Collection of toll tax on national highways and State highways should be done by State Governments, and the responsibility of maintaining them should rest on State Governments. Only then there can be a proper toll tax collection.

I would like to submit that there should be a revision of the provision of toll tax and the responsibility of collecting toll tax should be given to the State Governments.

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI (Darbhanga): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir, since I am the lone person to speak from my party, I hope I would get more time. I rise to speak against this Bill, but I am not against the intention of the hon. Minister or of the Government. I agree with them on issues on many issues put forward by the three speakers but I do disagree with them on some issues.

The hon. Minister has referred just now to 33 thousand kilometre long roads but as a matter of fact there are not even 33 kilometre long roads worth pride.

Mr. Chairman, if the condition of Indian highways is seen, you will feel ashamed.

There is not even a single highway on which you can travel upto 5 kilometres comfortably. The condition of highways is not likely to be improved soon. Highways are not according to their basic concept. No attention has so far been paid to that. That is the reason for their poor condition.

Mr. hon. Member has said just now that the number of fatal road accidents on highways cannot easily be estimated. A number of vehicles pass through highways. There is not a single highway on which travel can be performed continuously for 1 or 2 hours with the speed of 70-80 km. per hour. If you take the average speed on all the roads, it comes not more than 35 to 40 km. per hour. I would like to say that the more the energy loss per hour, the more loss of the country in terms of rupees. India is thus suffering a loss of hundreds of crores of rupees per day. If we provide good highways in India, we will be able to better the position of balance of payment to a great extent. I hold that if the speed on highways in India is raised equal to that of the world, it may help save petrol consumption by two and a half times. There is no medical facility on highways to meet any eventualities. There is not even facility of First Aid to take the persons to a hospital from the place of accident. Nor is there any arrangement of police along highways to provide safety to those who are travelling during night. Even if there is any such arrangement of police, they would be inside the offices but not along the highways. You may take the case of any highway. I have seen there is no arrangement of good rest-house anywhere. There is no arrangement of good refreshment anywhere. I would like to submit that these conditions should be improved and I think, if good highways are made available in India, there is, then, no reason for the Indians to feel hesitant in contributing money. At least the standard of highways are raised to such a level that vehicles might run on it at the speed of 80, 90 or say 100 k.m. per hour. I would like to

submit that the Government should bring forward such a Bill in which there should be a provision for renovating all the highways so that we may present before the World that India too has such highways. I do not think that any country of the world having the concept of highways would be ready to accept the existing high-ways of India as highways. I would like to forward a proposal to the hon. Minister, it is about the linking of the four matrocities with new highways under a new alignment. For example, Delhi to Calcutta, Calcutta to Madras, Madras to Bombay may be linked under some new alignment giving it a form of highway. This highway will now pass through any populated area. Traffice should be allowed to run on it accroding to the condition of traffic science of the world. There must be a facility of First-Aid as it is so in other countries or the world, there should also be a facility of police assistance. On such a highway with those facilities the vehicle owners would be saving two and a half times more money they are spending now and in that situation they would be ready to pay any amount of tax that would be levied. The Government can handover this project to some N.R.I. It can be given to any foreign agency either. This work can be given to any big Indian company or some other company. I claim that with the help of the income from these highways, the maintenance of the other 33000 km. highways will be easily done.

The hon. Minister should bring such a Bill in which there is a provision of linking at least the four major cities, viz., Delhi to Calcutta, Calcutta to Madras, Madras to Bombay and Bombay to Delhi. This highway should be constructed in such a way that the world may recognise it as a real highway. We are ready to support any efforts taken by the Government in this regard. we are also ready to support it if the Government proposes to levy tax on such a highway. I am myself a civil engineer. I can say on the basis of my own experience that the present highways

are totally worthless. They stand nowhere if assessed from the angle of highway concept. I would, therefore, oppose the Bill.

The money collected from such sources will not be utilised properly. Therefore if the Government brings such a Bill as can given us some facility, then we will support it. I would like to submit to the hon. Minister to withdraw this Bill and bring a comprehensive Bill so that you can give something to the nation, therefore, such petty things will not serve the purpose. Today a major part of the country's diesel and petrol is wasted..

[English]

Wear and ter to the vehicles.

[Translation]

People are being killed. We can save all these things by providing facilities. Therefore, I would like to submit to the Government to withdraw this Bill and bring a comprehensive Highways Bill and all of us will support it in the House. I will wait for it.

[English]

SHRI GOPI NATH GAJAPATHI (Berrampur): Mr Chairman, Sir, the prime object of amending the national Highways Act would be to allow promoters of roads and bridges to levy toll on users of these facilities for earning profits. The amendment Bill will help the private sector also promote such toll projects.

Indeed, Road Transport plays a key role in socio-economic development. Most suitable for short and medium distance, it offers a number of advantages such as flexibility, reliability, speed and door-to-door service. It complements other modes of transport. Road Transport forms indispensable elements of the National Transportation System. Over the years, share of Road Transport in overall

[Sh. Gopi Nath Gajapathi]

traffic handling has been continuously increasing. There has been a substantial shift from rail to road. Capacity constraints on railways and advantages of road transport, combined with expansion of road network, have contributed to the increase in the number of motor vehicles in the country. From just 34,000 buses in 1950-51, it has touched 1,66,93,000 in 1989-90. In the corresponding period, the number of trucks increased from 82,000 to 11,97,000. Eighth Plan envisages an Annual Growth of seven per cent for trucks and eight per cent for buses.

India has one of the largest Road Networks in the world. The country's total road length was 18,43,420 Kms. in 1987-88. Seventh Plan laid emphasis on a coordinated and balanced development of Road Network in the country under: One, Primary Roads comprising National Highways; two, Secondary and Feeder Road System covering State Highways and Major District Roads; three, Rural Roads including village and other District Roads. Substantial outlays were proposed for Road Development in the Rural and Tribal Areas.

Government is responsible for National Highways System. In 1947, approximately 2,500 Kms. of missing roadlinks and the thousands of culverts and bridges, which did not exist, were required to be constructed to have an integrated and continuous network. There was an increase in missing road links with the addition of new roads to the National Highway System in later years. Upto 31st March, 1990, road links including diversions constructed, totalled 4610 KMs., improvement of low-grade section completed were 23,075 Kms., widening and strengthening Single Lane Section to Double Lane Carriageway was done in 25,195 Kms. and also 469 major bridges constructed.

Present National Highways System includes a total road length of 33,612 kilometres. An expenditure of Rs. 1481.70 crores had been incurred in the Seventh Plan on development of National Highways. Though the National Highways constitute only two per cent of the total road length, they carry nearly one-third of road traffic. World Bank is to provide loans worth twenty crore US dollars for the development of National Highways in six States, namely, Gujarat, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Asian Development Bank is to provide loans worth 13.8 cores US dollars for development of National Highways in three States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and for State roads, in three States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

State Highways and District Rural Roads are the responsibility of State Governments and are maintained by various agencies in States and Union Territories. Roads are being developed in rural areas under Minimum Needs Programmed, the objective of it being to link all villages with a population of 1,500 and above 50 per cent of villages with a population of 1,000 to 1,500 with all-weather roads. Government also assists in development of certain selected roads in States.

Border Roads Development Board was set up in March, 1960, for accelerating economic development and straightening defence preparedness through rapid and coordinated improvement of road communication in North and North-Eastern border areas. Development activities now encompass Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and also Bhutan.

Regarding the present status of National Highways in India, about 300 kilo-

metres of national highways in six States will be widened and turned into four-lane stretches under Rs. 900 crores loan from the World Bank. The States to be covered are Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab. Giving this welcome information recently to the Parliamentary Consultative Committee attached to his Ministry, the Surface Transport Minister, hon. Shri Jagdish Tytler has said the project would include reconstruction of six bridges in the Ganjam district of Orissa that have been damaged by floods. Time and again, I have raised this matter in the august House and the needs to expedite the reconstruction to the damages six bridges in Ganjam District, which is prone to floods regularly every year. The damages to the bridges are increasing day by day, owing to a delayed reconstruction.

The Cuttack-Bhubaneswar portion of National Highway Number 5 will be converted into a four-lane stretch at a cost of Rs. 126 crores. This particular work will also include construction of a major bridge across the Mahanadi. The stretch of National Highway Number 5 between Ichhapur and Palasa also needs to be resurfaced urgently, as it is in an atrocious condition. Further, there are too many railway crossings between the above mentioned stretch causing serious obstruction in the free flow of vehicular traffic.

The Government of Orissa State to which I belong has proposed the following development of National Highways during the 8th Plan period. It has estimated an expenditure of Rs. 398.4 crores in road works and Rs. 53 crores in bridge works. As against these estimates, meagre funds released during the last four years from 1989 to 1992 are Rs. 12.9, 10.5, 13.8 and 12.7 crores respectively. I, therefore, take this opportunity to appeal to the Government of India to be

more liberal in the sanction of funds to the under-developed State like Orissa, in future.

Regarding the latest innovations in roadways the area in and around Los Angeles in the U.S. State of California is not just famous for the glitz of Hollywood; It also labours under traffic-clogged highways and almost unparalleled air pollution arising from the volume of vehicles.

This situation is, however, set to end within the next three years or so, with the introduction of a new innovation, the so-called "smart roads".

Behind the seemingly nonsense of the phrase, lies a new concept to direct the flow of traffic. It is already being tried out on an eight-kilometre long stretch of road near Los Angeles.

If this turns out to be a success, it could be installed by the end of the century on greatly congested motorway stretches across California and on the other heavily burdened traffic interchanges in the United States.

In addition, the transportation department in Sacramento, the State Capital believes the project points the way towards solving the problems of other States, as well as in Europe.

The system, known as inductive radio or INRAD, was developed by scientists at the Caltran organisation and the State University in San Luis Obispo in Southern California.

INRAD is made up of four elements: sensors which are connected to the road surface, a communications system passing data to a computer complete with monitor in the vehicle and a control centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude now.

SHRIGOPINATHGAJAPATHI: I would only appeal to our hon. dynamic Minister to consider these latest innovations and make a humble beginning of introducing these innovative systems in our own country.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that considering the importance played by Roads-Transport System in our socio-economic development, the Government of India will give its maximum attention to this vital sector. I lend my whole-hearted support to this important national Highways (Amendment) Bill 1992, moved by our dynamic hon. Union Minister of Surface Transport, Shri Jagdish Tytler.

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHURY (Jagatsinghpur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this Bill seeks only to amend the Section 7, to notify sections of the road from which they will collect levy.

Sir, the Minister in his introduction has not thrown sufficient light on what will be the amount of resources that would be available by this levy, and if this Act is implemented how much amount will be coming and how it will augment our resources to be used for renovating national highways and for having more national highways. So there is nothing concrete in the Minister's speech. The Minister only wants to augment the resources.

As we know, according to Section 7 of the National Highway Act, now it is taxed. When a new business or anything comes up, the Government levies tax. But here, they are going further. It means, they will identify certain areas, even in the old roads where they will impose levy. What will be the criteria for selecting such roads? That is not here. And the hon. Minister has not thrown light on it. The Minister only wants to take sanction from us, take authority from us to levy tax on it. So, there is a doubt. And the very doubt of purpose comes from there. It would have been better if the hon. Minister could have

put it clearly, how much resources will be mobilised by levying tax on this road, and what types of national highways - there are different types of national highways - will be there. Other wise this will lead to partiality and that may create headache even if the Bill is passed.

My second point is about the importance for the road transport. It will no doubt grow further. He has stated 40 per cent growth of the traffic. I will say that within the coming five or six years if more roads are not constructed it will be very difficult to keep up the impetus or the pace of our development. I would simply say that during these years this sector has been neglected.

It will not be irrelevant to say that after passing a unanimous Resolution here in this House the Central Government has not released the Central Road Funds to the States. You can easily imagine the plight of the States. There was a commitment in this regard. But the States are not getting it. Therefore the condition of State roads are still worse and the cost of transportation also goes up due to so many factors. The petrol consumption also goes up. You know how much petrol is being over-used and how much of the tyres is damaged because of the bad condition of the roads. This is also adding to the transportation cost.

With all this existing phenomenon, the addition of this tax for which there will be check gates will only add to the burden. The Minister is well aware from his experience as to how the check gates are playing a havoc in this country. This is one of the reasons for the recent truck operators' strike.

18.57 hrs.

[SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG *in the Chair*]

Taking all these experiences into con-

sideration why not the Government consider plying of vehicles in the National Highway at a particular point to collect the tax? The tax may vary according to the condition of the roads. That will be a rational way of collecting tax.

Only to give it to others you say that certain areas will be selected. It will also have an implication and it will affect the national economy. While trying to augment the resources the total national scene should not be overlooked. So this sectional approach is also bad and perhaps it is this sectional approach in our previous planning which has created such a crisis here. It is because we have not taken everything into consideration. I thought that the Minister would throw more light so that the House will be aware as to what is the amount of resources available to him and what is his planning. Is there any planning at all? If there is no planning and calculation, then why does he bring such a Bill in this House? I think the Bill should be based on certain calculation and assessment. But this lacks that. The Minister's speech should have thrown more light on that.

My next point is that this is a sector neglected. Shortly we are going to have our 8th Plan. In the 8th Plan the infrastructure should be there and it should be expanded also. There is a plan to hand over certain infrastructural areas to the private sector. Are you really going to hand it over to the private sector - either the old roads or the new ones that will be constructed?

19.00 hrs

So, allowing the private sector to look after the new roads, I think, has some meaning, in the present national context. But, giving the old sector to the private companies for improvement or something like that will be only in the interest of private companies and vested interests. So, that should

also be differentiated. There are certain States - it has already been pointed out - whose views are neglected. If you take kilometer-wise figures, - as has been pointed out - in the State like Orissa, the coverage of national highway is very small. So, also, when there is no railways, that fact should also be taken into consideration while constructing the national highways. The areas covered by the railways should not get the priority for new national highways. The areas that are not covered by the railways should get the priority. There are other defects in the national highways.

Take the case of the National Highway No. 2 which runs from Guwahati to Amritsar. There is no straight way; it goes in the ghat way and that costs more. Plans should be there to make it straight. Similarly, take the case of Sikkim where there is 'one-way' national highway, even in the border area. In the border areas, there is no railways also. So, these roads should be doubled; it is in the national interest. So, this whole transport and highways sector has been neglected and the Government must create resources. I will urge upon the Central Government to release immediately the road funds. If the road fund is not released, many States will not be able to maintain the roads. That has become an urgent one. I know as to why it is being neglected, if not looked into; and why the money collected which belongs to the national road fund - is being kept by the Finance Department. It is something very strange and in 1988, an unanimous resolution was passed.

SHRIJAGDISH TYTLER: It is not being collected.

SHRILOKANATH CHOUDHURY: They are collecting the money; and the money is with the Finance Department.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER: They have not charged.

SHRILOKANATH CHOUDHURY: I will say that passing this Bill will not solve the problem. The Government should be more specific and the Government should allot more funds for the national highways. The quality of service should be improved and other difficulties in the national highways should be removed. While selecting the sections, it should be considered as to how it will affect the economy of different sections. If that factor is not looked into, there will be serious problems.

So, with these reservations I end my speech.

[*Translation*]

SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN (Indore): Mr. Chairman, Sir, transportation is of great importance from the point of development of the entire country. The highways or the roads are of vital importance in the economic, cultural, political, social and other types of development of the country, therefore it should be looked at, from this point of view. The roads, in a way, connects the whole of the country. The roads are the basis of the national unity and the integrity, about which our colleagues often talk loudly. Through this Bill the facilities, which we are providing, are being provided to the whole of the country.

We are providing this facility keeping in view the development of the entire country, but the Bill presented for this purpose looks like a course-wise dinner in which separate charges will be taken for dal, chatni and pepper. The Bill is something like this. Through this Bill one thing is clear that it provides for the construction of bridges and tunnels, this is the additional facility and the taxes are charged for this additional facility but today a proposal has come that you can charge tax separately for a particular part. It means that the Government wants to strengthen itself by collecting additional taxes

but how will this additional load be managed. To collect tax for that particular part of the road, check-posts and bye lanes will be constructed, for which a provision of rupees 40 lakh has been made. How will the classification of this additional expenditure be made as to how and from where the tax is to be collected? You are going to hand over the construction work of a part of the road to someone. We object to it, since you have already divided the country and now you will divide the road as well. If you divide the road into parts, then there will be check-posts to collect tax everywhere, everywhere there will be the traffic jams. So, what are you giving in the name of the facility? What have you given till date, please think over it?

Mr. Chairman, Sir, since the time is short, I will talk about my own State. Madhya Pradesh is a State that connects the entire country. It is situated in the heart of the country and surrounded by borders of seven States. On the whole, the people of the entire country have to pass through Madhya Pradesh, if they want to go to any place in the country. In this way, they pass through Madhya Pradesh but even then what facilities we have been able to provide to Madhya Pradesh? A major part of Madhya Pradesh is backward and dominated by tribals. This State is rich in minerals, coal and natural resources but we have not been able to provide roads to this State. We have been able to sanction only two national highways during the last 20 years but they have not been constructed as yet. The average of the roads in this State is surprisingly low. The average of the roads in the whole of the country is 3 km. on every 100 kms. but in Madhya Pradesh it is only 7 km. It is the ill luck of Madhya Pradesh that nothing has been done during the last 40 years despite its 5 or 6 Ministers holding office at the Centre for the developments of roads. Many schemes of Madhya Pradesh are lying pending with the Centre, but nothing has been done so far. There have been several

Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh, many of whom have also been Ministers at the Centre, but they could not place their points here emphatically. The result is that only two national highways have been sanctioned to this State during the last 20 years. Later on the 'Daku Unmoofan Yojana' (Dacoit Elimination Scheme) was initiated in 1984. The dacoit elimination scheme is not for Madhya Pradesh alone. The State has a common boundary with Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar. The scheme was launched on a large scale. As many as 14 roads had to be constructed in the first phase and 61 roads in the second phase in Madhya Pradesh. It was decided that both the Centre and the State would share the cost on 50:50 basis. However, this is also not justified because the State has a common boundary with seven States and most of the country's traffic passes through Madhya Pradesh. Despite such a large volume of traffic a proposal for the construction of just 10 roads for an estimated expenditure of Rs. 65 crore was sent to the centre in 1987. On repeated by raising the matter by the Chief Minister and P.W.D. Minister of the State funds were sanctioned. This issue is never raised by the representatives of the State in the Union Cabinet. The State Government is criticised on petty issues but nothing is being done for the betterment of the State. Despite loud protests by the Chief Minister of the State just Rs. 19 crore were sanctioned for the scheme of Rs. 65 crore. Mr. Chairman Sir, it is a matter to be pondered over that when additional taxes are being levied, what additional benefits are being given. Most of the traffic in Madhya Pradesh is of Coal only. Though the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Patwa, repeatedly took up all this with the centre yet the representatives of the State sitting on the other side did not pay any attention. Shri Patwa about apprised the centre of his views issue of royalty on coal and other minerals on a number of occasions and also requested the Centre to raise royalty on minerals, because 27 roads

in the State are affected by coal traffic. This issue is not the concern of Madhya Pradesh and the State Governments alone. Issue of national highways is also not the concern of Madhya Pradesh alone but of all the States as the roads link the States. One national highway links the State with Bihar. There are roads everywhere. Shri Rajiv Gandhi's name is repeatedly mentioned. Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi during one of this election campaigns in Mandsaur had announced the construction of Mahu-Ajmer national highway via Neemuch and Ratlam. If Shri Rajiv Gandhi is really respected by you people, at least, translate his last wish into reality. In fact, Madhya Pradesh has been neglected for quite a long time.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the State has demanded 8 national highways. As I submitted earlier, Madhya Pradesh is an important State and many scheme of the State are pending with the Centre. While constructing national highways it should be taken care that there are constructed outside the city limits. Earlier, it was there. But now with the expansion of cities there roads pass through them. I had been repeatedly raising the issue of Indore city, my constituency, through which the Indore Dewas bypass passes. This bypass was to be converted into four lanes. This national highway No.3 passes through the city and fatal accidents take place on it almost daily. Similar is the situation with the Jabalpur bypass and the national highway, a proposal of which has been pending here since 1987, but no one has raised it even once. Since I was elected to the House, in repeated meetings in this regard, I had been told that this scheme comes under the World Bank. Surveys are being conducted time and again but accidents are taking place even now without any check.

Therefore, when a proposal is made here to raise the tax rates, the Government should also think about benefits. People

[Shrimati Sumitra Mahajan]

[English]

want two square meals a day. But the Government wants to deprive them of the same also through this Bill. People must have the paying capacity. So the Government should think about providing amenities while bringing forward proposals to raise additional taxes.

In addition, I would like to know whether we have ever pondered over reducing expenditure. Many a bridge are only constructed on paper only. During construction of the roads residential houses of the engineers incharge are also constructed out of the sanctioned funds. The House is going to discuss the cultural policy, but the people scheduled to speak cannot put forth their views forcefully. The people desirous of speaking should be clean hearted. The tempo of discussion is a separate issue. That is why the House must ponder over the ways and means to reduce expenditure and bring reforms. Generally the value of tenders is made higher by 1 1/2 to 2 times that actual cost and the officials take their per centage. Will the House ponder over reducing the expenditure and putting checks on payment of percentages. I oppose the amendment brought before the House because it will give rise to corruption as we are not able to reduce expenditure by any means. The road network is to be widened from the collection of levies from common man who will use the roads. The Government wants to arm itself with more powers. I am also apprehensive that these powers would be delegated to others and taxes would be levied for various fractions of highways also. This thing I totally oppose.

I oppose the National Highway (Amendment) Bill under discussion in the House. The Government should not expect anything from the people when it is not in a position to provide facilities to them.

SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI(Amalapuram): Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the National Highways (Amendment) Bill. In this connection, I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister certain aspects with regard to accidents on national highways. Though the Government is collecting a lot of taxes on national highways, it is not paying proper attention to control the accidents. Every year, by way of insurance claims, they are paying crores of rupees to those who are involved in accidents on the national highways. To control the accidents on the national highways, I would like to give a suggestion to the hon. Minister. Long back, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has proposed a scheme for the construction of more rest-house....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come to the point. Speak on the amendment proposed.

SHRI G.M.C BALAYOGI: Yes Sir. But the control of accidents on the national highways is also a very important aspect. The Government should take necessary steps to control the accidents. The purpose behind the introduction of this Bill is to invite private persons to construct some national highways, bridges and tunnels and also for levying taxes on the national highways. It automatically increases the freight charges and also the prices of diesel and petroleum. This also affects the prices of all the essential commodities as they are being transported by trucks. So, I request the hon. Minister to take proper steps in this regard so that the prices of these commodities do not increase.

In this context I would like to bring it to the notice of the hon. Minister that the Government of Andhra Pradesh has sent a number of proposals to the Central Govern-

ment. The length of National Highways in Andhra Pradesh is only 2587 Kms. As per the norms of Government of India the length of National Highways in Andhra Pradesh has to be 5540 Kms. Proposal for the upgradation of 22 State Roads, as National Highways to a length of 6410 Kms. were sent by the State Government from time to time. Approval is awaited in respect of all these 22 proposals.

With regard to Central Road Fund Schemes, the Government of India, Ministry of Surface Transport, in their letter dated 3.1.89 informed that as per the revised resolution of Parliament passed on 13.5.88, a sum of Rs. 20.76 crores is likely to annually accrue to Andhra Pradesh State under Central Road Fund and requested the Government of Andhra Pradesh to draw up a list of works to be included under this programme for a period of six years, that is from 1989-90 to 1994-95. As per the guidelines communicated by the Government of India, Ministry of Surface Transport, 24 proposals to a tune of Rs. 290.95 crores, were sent to Government of India for release of funds under Central Road Fund.

Government of India have sanctioned only four proposals to a tune of Rs. 7.81 crores. The remaining 20 proposals to a tune of Rs. 283.14 crores are still to be approved by the Government of India.

So, I request the hon. Minister that the proposal regarding upgradation of 22 State Roads, as National Highways, and the other proposal for release of fund under Central Road Fund should be cleared by the Government of India immediately.

Andhra Pradesh is a coastal State. Government of India has proposed to upgrade the State road from Tada to Ichapuram as the National Highway. Tada is in Tamil Nadu and Ichapuram is on Orissa-Andhra Pradesh border. One-third of the

road has been completed and one-fourth is yet to be completed. If this road is developed it will serve the development of the entire coastal States of India, as it covers almost four States. This will also help the fishermen in a great way. They can sell fish and other products to other States. So, I request the hon. Minister to kindly look into this matter and clear this Ichapuram to Tada road as early as possible.

There is one more proposal from the Government of Andhra Pradesh. There is an inter-State road in Andhra Pradesh, connecting Pondicherry State, that is from Kakina to Yanam via Tallarevu. It is proposed to involve only Rs. 3.6 crores. This proposal is pending with the Central Government for a long time. I request the hon. Minister to clear this project.

Lastly, I would like to say that there is no national highway in my constituency, Amalapuram. The population, particularly in my district, is about 50 lakh. More than half of the countries of the world have less population than that of my district. We have been asking the Central Government for the clearance of two projects, that is Yedarlanka - Yanam and a bridge on Gautami, Mukteswaram-Kotipalli. You may kindly look into the matter. I request the hon. Minister to take proper action in this regard.

Thank you, Sir.

[*Translation*]

SHRI TEJSINGHRAO BHONSLE (Ramtek): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to support the National Highways Amendment Bill. It is a much delayed Bill moved by the Government. The present proposal was not brought to the fore at the time of first amendment made under the section Seven, because it was stipulated that under the provisions of this Section no tax or recovery should be charged through toll tax. Conse-

[Sh. Tejsingh Rao Bhonsle]

quently, the condition of the national highways continued to deteriorated throughout the country. When our hon. Members make foreign visit to the country like Japan, America or say, any other countries, they must have observed that there is a vast difference between the highways of those countries and to that of ours. The highways of our country are the highways only for the name sake. Some of the hon. Members have pointed out here that on these highways, it is difficult to drive even at the speed of 50 kilometer per hour. At times, there are accidents in such conditions resulting into deaths of many persons. Thus it was felt deligatory to make certain provisions to avoid such events.

A sum of Rs. 1400 crore was spent on it during the Seventh Five Year Plan. There is something yet to be done even in the present Eighth Five Year Plan in this regard, but I think that it will make hardly any difference in the situation, because it is a very big project. When the national highways came into existence at that time there used to be less loading on trucks, but on the contrary, trucks are over-loaded now a days that is why the national highways are now getting damaged regularly. They need repairing. The Government has to manage the funds for it. There is a problem in this case that those who do not utilise these roads, cannot be taxed and no other tax can be charged by the Government. You should realise the amount from those vehicle owners whose vehicles cause damage to the roads. The money thus collected may be utilised for repairing the roads, for improving the conditions of the bridges and for the maintenance of all those things.

I have seen many accidents taking place

at bathing ghats. Accident took place due to the absence of walls on those ghats. Many persons were drowned and died and at times even the buses full of passengers fell into water and not even a single persons survived. I have myself witnessed such events on many places. At the moment, I would like to thank the hon. Minister who has devised a new source of income and the money accrued from the above income would be utilised for the repairing of these roads and also for constructing new roads. (*Interruptions*)*

[*English*]

MR. CHAIRMAN: It will not go one record.

[*Translation*]

SHRI TEJ SINGHRAHO BONSLE: Shri Fatmi, who was speaking just now, had fully supported the Bill. But he really failed to understand what he was speaking because he had to oppose the Bill so in the end he had stated that he opposed the Bill. It is not fair. Sister Mahajan jee too holds the similar opinion.

The national highways are spread throughout the country. There are four such national highways in Maharashtra.

[*English*]

MR. CHAIRMAN: You kindly stop here because we have to start Half-An-Hour Discussion. You can continue tomorrow.

* Not recorded.