

329 Coconut PHALGUNA 1, 1900 (SAKA) Hunger strike by 330
Development Board Bill and
Copra Cess Bill Shri Manoranjan
Bhakta, M.P. (CA)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That Clause 4, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 4 as amended, was added to the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 20 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1— (Short title, extent and commencement)

Amendment made

"Page 1, line 3,—

for "1978" substitute "1979".
(2)

(Shri Surjit Singh Barnala)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That Clause 1, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 1, as amended, was added to the Bill.

Enacting Formula

Amendment made

"Page 1, line 1,—

for "Twenty-ninth" substitute
Thirtieth". (1)

(Shri Surjit Singh Barnala)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the Enacting Formula, as amended, stand part of the Bill".

The motion was adopted.

The Enacting Formula, as amended, was added to the Bill.

The Title was added to the Bill.

SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA: I move:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

The motion was adopted.

16.15 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

HUNGER STRIKE BY SHRI MANORANJAN
BHATKA, M.P. AND SITUATION IN
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We now take up the Calling Attention. Shri Nihar Laskar.

SHRI NIHAR LASKAR (Karimganj): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Home Affairs to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

That indefinite hunger strike by Shri Manoranjan Bhatka, M.P. and the circumstances that led to this situation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

16.16 hrs.

[SHRI DHIRENDRANATH BASU in the
Chair]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
(SHRI DHANIK LAL MANDAL):
Sir, In January, 1979 Shri Manoranjan Bhakta, Member, Lok Sabha, from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands sent a charter of 90 demands to the Prime Minister wherein he had stated that if the demands were not fulfilled by 9th February, 1979 he would go on indefinite hunger strike before the Chief Commissioner's Secretariat at Port Blair. Prime Minister in his letter dated 17th January, 1979 wrote

[Shri Dhanik Lal Mandal]

to the Member that while the Government would give full and sympathetic consideration to the legitimate grievances of the people of these Islands, he did not think it was necessary for the Member to undertake an indefinite fast to press his demands. However, Shri Manoranjan Bhakta has gone on indefinite hunger strike from 9th February, 1979.

The demands are of various kinds. Some demands are political in nature, like a democratic set-up in the Islands, more powers for Panchayats, enlargement of Chief Commissioner's Advisory Committee, regularisation of encroachments on land as well as allotment of land to local landless cultivators in these Islands. Then there are demands relating to developmental matters like improvement of air service and starting of a new air service between Madras and Port Blair, improvement of both mainland-Islands and inter-island shipping services, improvement of roads and road transport in the islands, improvement in sectors like power, irrigation, education, health and housing. Yet another set of demands concern service matters of Government servants and labourers in these Islands and are also concerned with the conduct of some officers in the Administration.

Some of the demands concern the local Administration while other concern the Government of India. They are under examination and efforts are being made to expedite their disposal.

The Andaman and Nicobar Administration have also informed that on 17th February the local Cong. (I) Party organised a rally of about 2300 persons. On 19th February 96 women and 25 men also courted arrest by picketing in front of the residences of officers and the Secretariat gates.

According to the latest information received from the Andaman and Nicobar Administration the local Administration have provided full medical facilities to Shri Manoranjan Bhakta and a panel of doctors had been sent

to examine and advise him and others to shift him for treatment to the hospital or accept treatment in the place where he is on hunger strike. It is learnt that the local Congress (I) have also arranged a private doctor who is examining Shri Bhakta and advising him.

As mentioned earlier the points raised by the Honourable Member are under various stages of consideration. I would, therefore, appeal to the Honourable Member to give up the fast and talk to us.

SHRI NIHAR LASKAR: Sir, I have called the attention of the House because this is a very serious matter. An hon. member of this House, the sole member representing the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, is on fast and he is on fast for the last 12 days. As mentioned in the Statement, he started fast on 9th February. Today is the 12th day of his fast. We are really very concerned about his health. From the statement we do not find anything about it. The only thing mentioned is that some doctors are attending on him. A fast of 12 days means something very serious. I would appeal to the hon. Minister to take all possible steps so that nothing can happen to our member of the House.

Secondly, I am glad that the Central Government has realised the importance of the demands that he has made. His charter of demands contains 90 demands. But they have mentioned only a few demands in the statement. The Minister himself has said that the points raised by the Hon. Member are in various stages of consideration. But we do not know what stage of consideration. This is not the first time he has mentioned these things. For the last two years he is a Member of the House and we have seen him raising, several times, the difficulties and problems of the tiny Island of Andamans. But nothing has so far happened.

The demands are mainly two. One is for a local set-up for the people of that area and the second, his main grievance, is against the Chief Commissioner. The officer concerned is behaving as if it is his kingdom. There is nothing mentioned about that in the statement; it only refers to 'some grievances'. But the hon. Member had made specific charges against the Chief Commissioner there. Are you going to give any assurance to this House and to the Hon. Member who is on fast for so many days, that there will be an enquiry against this officer? What are you going to do? My first question is, what are you going to do about the charges he has specifically made against the Chief Commissioner—about corruption, nepotism and what not? You are quite silent about this in your statement.

Of course, I do know about the demand for a popular set up there. I believe there is an Advisory Council, but they have no voice at all. I have been told that even though there are some elected people and two are nominated—and if the elected members give certain points to be discussed for the betterment of the area, they are not discussed, not even put on the agenda. They say that it is simply an advisory body and only whatever the Chief Commissioner says should be discussed. So, what is the use of this sort of Committee? That is why they are demanding a sort of respectable set-up which can solve the problems of this island.

There are other small demands which can be implemented immediately if the local administration or the Central Government wishes. One is for drinking water to be provided to the villages. I have seen it for myself. In port Blair itself they get drinking water through a pipe from a distance of 15 kilometres. There are several villages on the way, but you have not given any connection to them. These people are thirsting for drinking water, but you are not providing it.

Then, another demand is for some sort of quarters, but to this also you are not listening.

Thirdly, buses are very few there and the population is increasing. So, more and more buses should be plied on the roads.

There are demands which can be easily met, but you are not listening. Therefore, he has no other alternative except to go on fast. I am glad you are requesting him to give up the hunger-strike, saying that you are looking into the demands. But kindly tell us, since you have said in your statement that the various points are under consideration, at what stage of consideration they are. If you give us some idea on this point, we will be really happy. The Member, also, is suffering not for himself but for the people there. If you show some concern for his fasting, I think the people there would be benefitted.

The first thing is, what are you going to do about the specific charges against the Chief Commissioner. Are you going to have some sort of enquiry against him? Recently, the Prime Minister also went there, and it is my knowledge that several people have made allegations against the Chief Commissioner. . .

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah): I have also made several representations.

SHRI NIHAR LASKAR: So, why are you not listening? If the position is so, why can't you remove him? He is not a Lord there!

Firstly, kindly take steps against the Chief Commissioner, against whom everybody is complaining. Even the Hon. Member here, who is a Leader of one of the Opposition parties, is saying so, we are saying so and the Member who is fasting, is also saying so. He is the sole representative of the Andaman: kindly do something about this.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: I have personally made a representation

[Shri Samar Mukherjee]

regarding the demand for an elected body, to the Prime Minister—with a delegation from Andamans. That was done long before. The hon. Member is justified because repeatedly demands have been made and these are being neglected.

श्री धनिक लाल मुखर्जी : महोदय, माननीय सदस्य ने प्रधान मंत्री जी को 90 मांगों का चार्टर दिया और प्रधान मंत्री जी ने उस के उत्तर में जो पत्र माननीय सदस्य को दिया, उस में यह स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि माननीय सदस्य की अपनी बात कहने का और लिखने का सब अधिकार है लेकिन अपनी मांगें मनवाने के लिए हंगर स्ट्राइक पर जाने की क्या आवश्यकता है ?

श्री समर मुखर्जी : उसको रोकने के लिए भी आपमें.....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your name is not there, Mr. Mukherjee. I have already allowed you. This cannot be taken as a precedent.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: I am also making an appeal for the withdrawal of the hunger strike.

श्री धनिक लाल मुखर्जी : महोदय, मैं पूरे आदर और सम्मान के साथ श्री मनोरंजन भक्त से कहना चाहता हूँ कि जब प्रधान मंत्री जी वहाँ की, अखंडमान निकोबार द्वीप की जेल को राष्ट्रीय मेमोरियल का रूप देने के लिए वहाँ गये थे तो उस अवसर पर उन्हें अनशन नहीं करना चाहिए था। अपनी मांगें मनवाने का यह कोई तरीका नहीं है। जैसा कि मैंने अपने बयान में कहा है, और माननीय सदस्य भी जानते हैं कि हमने क्या क्या किया है। ये जो 90 मांगें हैं इनके बारे में पिछले तीस सालों में क्या किया गया जबकि इनकी सरकार थी? इन 90 मांगों का एक चार्टर एक साथ दे देना और यह कहना कि इनको इतने दिनों में पूरा कर दिया जाए, नहीं तो हम अनशन कर रहे हैं कहां तक उचित है? इन 90 मांगों में से बहुत सारी बातों को पूरा कर दिया गया है। आपकी इफमेंशन के लिए मैं आपको बताता हूँ।

For example, children of government servants who die while in service, are being given employment as per existing rules of the Central Government. This is Demand No. 24.

Necessary age relaxation is being given by the Administration to the students being sent for training. This is Demand No. 25.

Whenever possible, interviews for jobs are held at outlying stations. This is Demand No. 26.

Action has already been taken to purchase more buses. Eleven buses are expected to arrive within two or three months and nine more shortly. 40 buses are planned to be procured during the Sixth Plan. This is Demand No. 51.

The foundation stone for a 46-bedded youth hostel has been laid by the Prime Minister. A proposal for a Janata Hotel has been mooted in the Tourism Ministry. This is Demand No. 52.

Mid-term transfers are being avoided as far as possible except in public interest. This is Demand No. 56.

The UPSC has agreed to make Port Blair a centre for UPSC examinations. This is Demand No. 60.

The provision made by the Municipal Board for additional labourers for sanitary work has been agreed to by the Administration. This is Demand No. 73.

The development of the existing airstrip is under consideration. A new strip near Port Blair with more facilities is also under the active consideration of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

इस के अनतिरिक्त, महोदय, प्रधान मंत्री जी जब वहाँ पहुंचे थे तो उन्होंने दो-तीन बातों का एलान किया था। एक तो उन्होंने यह एलान किया था कि इन्टर हाईलेण्ड शिपिंग सर्विस जो कि मेन लेण्ड की शिपिंग सर्विस है, उसको हम एक्सटेंड करेंगे। उसकी मंजूरी हो गयी है लेकिन उसकी राह में कुछ बाधाएँ हैं जिनके कारण हम नहीं कर सकते हैं। जब तक शिपिंग एक्ट में इस प्रोवीजन को रिलैक्स नहीं किया जाए तब तक हम नहीं कर सकते हैं। प्रधान मंत्री जी ने कहा है कि वे उसको देखेंगे। जो उनके अधिकार में होगा, उस पर विचार कर के उसको वे करेंगे।

ऐसे ही कार निकोबार में जो सोसायटी है, वह शिप लेना चाहती है, फेरी बोट लेना चाहती है, उसके लिए श्री प्रधान मंत्री जी ने प्रावधान दिया है। मद्रास से कार निकोबार और पोर्ट ब्लेयर में एयर सर्विस के लिए श्री प्रधान मंत्री जी ने प्रावधान दिया है।

बाकी बातें किस स्टेजिज में हैं, किस स्टेजिज पर कंसीडरेशन में हैं, उनके बारे में मैंने सारी बातें आपको बताया हैं। दूसरी मांगें बराबर पूरे कंसीडरेशन में हैं। इन 90 मांगों में से 69 मांगें तो ऐसी हैं जिनका लोकल एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन से सम्बन्ध है, उस से सम्बन्धित हैं और 30 मांगें ऐसी हैं जो सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट की जितनी भी मिनिस्ट्रीज हैं, डिपार्टमेंट हैं, उनसे सम्बन्धित हैं। तो उसमें तो समय लगेगा ही हमारी इच्छा रहते हुए भी। इसलिये मैं माननीय सदस्य से अपील करता हूँ कि यह तरीका छोड़ दें, समाप्त करें और बात कर के इसको तय करें, वही तरीका अच्छा है।

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are prepared to look into the other grievances?

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: I also join in the appeal.

SHRI NIHAR LASKAR: About the Chief Commissioner, he has not said anything. Please tell that you are looking into that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has told that he is prepared to look into the other grievances you have mentioned.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: You should send a message to him that we all request him to withdraw his hunger strike.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House now stands adjourned till 11 a.m. tomorrow.

16.32 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, February, 21, 1979/Phalguna 2, 1900 (Saka)