

[Shri Bipin Pal Das]

the spirit in which this settlement was reached and shared the hope that friendly relations and economic co-operation between our two countries can be developed further.

15.39 hrs.

**MOTOR VEHICLES (AMENDMENT)
BILL**

**THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING
AND TRANSPORT (DR. G. S. DHIL-
LON)** I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 1939, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration".

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I have pleasure in moving that the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 1976, which has been passed by Rajya Sabha after full consideration on 18-1-76, may be taken into consideration.

15.36 hrs.

[SHRI VASANT SATHE in the Chair]

As you are all aware, one of the measures included in the 20-Point Economic Programme is the removal of constraints on the movement of vehicles and the introduction, for this purpose, of a Scheme of National Permits. At present, the operation of goods vehicles (trucks) between two or more States is governed by agreements among the concerned States. Several administrative and procedural requirements (such as obtaining counter-signatures on permits, payment of taxes, etc.) are involved in operating vehicles on routes covering two or more States. In order to reduce the inconvenience, on this account, a Scheme of Inter-State Regional Permits popularly called Zonal Permits was initiated about ten years

ago. Four such Zonal Schemes have already been introduced. The fifth one has also been finalised and it is expected to be put into operation shortly. Under these Schemes 200 public carriers of each State within a Zone are authorised to ply in the other States in that Zone on the basis of payment of taxes for the Home State and a composite fee of Rs. 700/- per annum (in lieu of taxes) in respect of the other States. The composite fee is also paid in the home State. The procedural requirements have been further simplified in the National Permit Scheme, which envisages the issue of 5300 permits for goods vehicles by the various States and Union Territories. A national permit holder will have to choose a minimum of four other contiguous States for operation excluding the Home State. He can choose more if he wishes and his business demands; such a course. An authorisation will be required to permit the operator of a vehicle covered by a national permit to use his vehicle in the other States. A fixed fee of Rs. 500/- per annum is to be paid for the authorisation irrespective of the number of States chosen for operation. The States have agreed as in the case of Zonal Permits, the Motor Vehicles tax payable by the National Permit holder to States other than the home State will be limited to Rs. 700/- only. This is a great advantage, considering the usual rate of M.V. tax for trucks which stands at about Rs. 5000/-.

The scheme was finalised after consultation with representatives of Road Transport Operators, State Governments and Union Administrations. The points of view expressed by them have been taken into account to the extent possible. As the implementation of the Scheme required amendment of the M. V. Act, 1939, and as the matter was urgent, the M. V. (Amendment) Ordinance was promulgated on 28-9-75. The M. V.

(National Permit) Rules, 1975, were also published on 17th December, 1975, after giving opportunity to all persons likely to be affected to make suggestions and representations and after considering these suggestions, etc. The stage is now set for the grant of these permits.

In order to avoid concentration of permits, the Scheme envisages that no national permit will be issued to an individual owner if he already holds three or more valid national or inter-State permits. The ceiling has been fixed at seven in the case of a Company which expression includes all bodies corporate.

To meet the social purpose enshrined in the Ordinance, guidelines have been circulated to the State Governments for the grant of national permits. The main consideration for the grant of the permits will be that only such applicants as are likely to contribute to the movement of goods between the States in the interest of the public should be given permits. Normally, upto 50 per cent of the national permits would be granted to those already holding inter-State permits, upto 25 per cent to those holding inter-State permits and the remaining 25 per cent. to new entrepreneurs including ex-Army personnel holding valid civilian licences and unemployed drivers.

You will be glad to know that West Bengal has selected 244 applicants for grant of permits and have already sent offers to 230 parties.

Some other States have also processed. The remaining States are expected to invite applications shortly. It is possible that the bulk of the national permits may be issued by February-March, 1976.

The National Transport Permit Scheme is proposed to be reviewed after one year and the number of permits will be increased, if necessary. It was considered desirable to make

a modest beginning and that is why a ceiling of 5300 permits has been fixed, for the present. The incidence of taxation on the operators under the National Permit Scheme will also be much less than what they would have to bear if the vehicles are to operate on the basis of payment of taxes in all the States. The National Permit Scheme, when it is fully implemented, is expected to help in development of the country's economy by speeding up the movement of goods on long-distance routes. The Scheme will, therefore, serve the interest of the public in a big way.

The Bill, which is now before you, seeks to replace the Ordinance promulgated on 26th September, 1975. It is a non-controversial measure. Now, Sir, I commend the Bill for the consideration of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill further to amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 1939, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

SHRI DINESH JOARDER (MALDA): After a long debate on the previous bill, which was termed by many of us as a black bill, viz. the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matters Bill, we have become shocked and mentally perturbed. Anyway, we are glad that our new Minister, Dr. Dhillon has brought forward this bill concerning the national permit for motor vehicles involving national interests in this matter.

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH): If it is so, compared to the last Bill why can't you pass it without a discussion?

SHRI DINESH JOARDER: We have to draw the Minister's attention to certain important matters also concerning Road Transport. This Bill is a very small measure, and is only an amendment to Section 63 of the Motor Vehicles Act—in comparison to the

[Shri Dinanath Jaiswar]

problems involving this transport organization. It is a very big system, I mean this road transport system, and it is almost parallel to the railway services in our country. It is so big that the mileage covered by the road transport is much higher than what is covered by the Railways. About 9 lakh miles or roughly 14 lakh kilometers except of the roads covered by the road transport system. More than 14 lakhs of people are engaged in this system or organisation. According to one journal published by the Automobile Industries:

"The road transport system accounts for over 30 per cent of the goods and about 50 per cent of the passenger traffic of the country and carrying in terms of value over 60 per cent of the export cargo moved to the ports, apart from providing employment to 9 million people and contributing Rs. 1,900 crores or so per annum to the national exchequer."

This is such a vast organisation. But the people engaged in the road transport system are mostly workers, labourers, people coming from the low income group, people from the lower strata of society. Only a few people who have invested large sums in big companies are getting some benefits in the form of profits whereas 95 per cent of the people engaged in this industry are being exploited everyday, be they the drivers, assistants or garage workers. They are being deprived of the remuneration, just remuneration and wages for their labours every day.

Before going into the working conditions of the labour, I want to say that there is no comprehensive and systematic planning or a good organisation for the road transport system. The railways have a coordinated system all over the country. They have the zonal railways, the Railway Board, the Railway Ministry and so on. But, so far as the road transport is concerned, there is no comprehensive or integrated planning for its develop-

ment. It is being controlled by the regional Road Transport Authority, the Transport Authority of the State, now the Zonal Transport Authority, and, lastly, by the Ministry of Shipping and Transport. The multiplicity of authorities over the road transport system creates chaos and confusion. There is no uniformity in the matter of imposition of taxation. There are check-posts and tax-posts in different parts of the country. Even inter-State permits are being controlled by the check-posts and vehicles are not permitted to move according to their requirements. Unless you remove all these obstacles and impediments, you cannot improve the services provided by the road transport organisation. They are carrying goods from one part of the country to another which are essential for the existence of the people living in distant and remote parts. These vehicles are moving every day to places where there are no railways, carrying the daily necessities of the people. So, we want a comprehensive, intensive and co-ordinated plan to improve the conditions of service in this road transport system, so that it can properly serve the people at large, in the villages and in the cities.

As I have already stated, there are as many as four to five lakhs of heavy vehicles and also several lakhs of small and medium size vehicles operating in this road transport system but the condition of the roads is so bad that these vehicles cannot continue for a long period, and the owner-drivers having two or three trucks or lorries, or even small companies with a limited capital investment owning eight or ten trucks, cannot maintain their vehicles for more than three or four years. The cost of fuel, petroleum, diesel, gear oil, motor parts, tyres, etc., is so high that they are forced to carry goods beyond the permitted capacity, as they cannot earn a profit unless they do it, and the result is that they have to pay to each check post and police post some money for easy passage and in that way corrupt practices come in. Further,

because of such over-loading, there are accidents every day leading to the death of drivers pedestrians, etc.

So, we have no objection to the introduction of this national permit, but unless these basic questions are attended to, you will not be able to solve the problem. This national permit is only going to benefit a limited number of privileged people owning a large number of vehicles which they can ply between distant cities like Delhi and Calcutta or Delhi and Madras, but what about the lakhs of people who own only one, two or three trucks and ply within a district or between two districts or between two or three States only? We expected something more from you, Mr. Dhillon because you were Minister in Punjab and were holding the same portfolio also. You have got a lot of experience,

In the current budget, what we see is that all over India, we are having 14 lakh kms. of road and you are maintaining bridges, culverts and constructing new roads.

We are having a total of 55 National Highways. Out of them, 44 are fully constructed and 11 are under construction. In comparison to the vastness of our country, the number is very small. According to the length of the road that we have, in the current budget,

only Rs. 16 crores have been sanctioned for the maintenance, development and extension of the road facilities in the country. In my State, we are having 3 or 4 National Highways and they have become so dilapidated with the result that every day so many accidents take place on these roads and motor vehicles cannot move. National Highway No. 34 which runs from Calcutta to Siliguri via Farakka, is worst amongst all of them.

MR CHAIRMAN: You can continue tomorrow.

I propose to adjourn the House now to enable Members to witness Beating the Retreat. Before doing so, I may remind Members that tomorrow at 11 A.M. two minutes silence will be observed by the House in memory of those who gave their lives in the struggle for India's freedom. The Speaker will take the Chair a little before 11 A.M.. You are also requested to come a little earlier and the House now stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 10.59 A.M.

16 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Fifty-nine minutes past Ten of the Clock on Friday, January 30, 1976/ Magha 10, 1897 (Saka).