

19.12 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION RE:
ALLOTMENT OF SCOOTERS

Mr. Speaker: We will now take up the Half-an-Hour Discussion.

Shrimati Tarkeshwari Sinha (Barh): After this discussion, I am coming to a very small point, and that is in regard to the discussion that I have raised about the allotment of scooters. I have raised this point because scooter is the only means of transportation for a poor man or a person belonging to the lower middle or middle income-group. In view of the fact that scooter is very scarce and thousands of people are in the waiting list, it is very difficult to make any conditions for the equitable distribution of scooters. So, after much consideration, the Government of India made certain rules for the allotment of scooters to Government servants. One condition was a particular distance of 5 kilometres from the place of residence. The second condition was a particular salary limit; that is to say, only Government servants drawing a particular salary will be eligible for the allotment of scooters. Fundamentally I am opposed to this criterion of salary for becoming eligible to the allotment of scooter. When the Government of India is crying from the housetops that it believes in a classless society, how could it make this type of classification based on salary in the Government service itself? You first fixed a salary limit of Rs. 500; later on, it was reduced to Rs. 350. Unless a person draws that salary, he will not be entitled to the allotment of a scooter. In other words, those who are getting less than Rs. 350 as salary will not be eligible for this kind of facility. For whom are you building this State or society? I very strongly resent this kind of attitude on the part of the Government of India. Whether it is within the means of the individual to buy a scooter or not should be left to him for decision. It is not for the Government to impose

a condition on such people "look here, we do not consider you fit enough to have scooters; therefore, we shall put a blanket disapproval on your buying scooters". Sir, as the custodian of this House, I hope you will admit that this kind of classification is not moral and it cannot be justified by any canons of justice. I hope the Government of India will reconsider its decision.

If there is scarcity of scooters, it is understandable that out of 1,000 people who apply only 20 people will get it. But which those 20 people should be, it should not be left for the Government to decide. There should not be any classification, as at present, on the basis of salary. The poor people should also have the right to have a conveyance of their own, if they can afford it. After all, it is not always the case that a person who draws above Rs. 350 saves more than a person who draws less than that; sometimes, a person with a smaller salary may be saving more. So, if he can afford it, he should have the right to get a scooter, which is a poor man's conveyance where he can carry his family members also. It should be left to that person to decide how he will provide money for buying the scooter. Therefore, I would submit to the Government that it should reconsider this matter and give freedom to all persons irrespective of their salaries, to buy scooters from the quota. If there is limited supply, it can be allotted on the basis of priority of application but definitely not on the basis of salary.

Secondly, the rules which are framed for the allotment of scooters should be framed after due deliberation and mature consideration of all aspects.

It does not speak very well of the Government if every day rules are changed. The rule was made that people living beyond five kilometres will be allotted scooters. As you know, Sir, applications are received

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on the basis of priority. The applications have been pending for years. In between the Government of India revised their earlier rule in which they said that all those applications which were rejected earlier on the basis of 5-kilometre rule will be allowed to be presented again on the basis of retrospective effect with the result that thousands of people—at least I have got the figure of 1,500 people—will be upset completely by this re-arranging of the order of priority. Persons who may have applied earlier and whose application had been rejected on this distance ground will come over the head of some other persons who have got the priority because their application was rejected. Now, B stands a chance of getting the scooter but with the revised rule that person comes on his head and gets the allotment on the basis of this priority. I am not denying the opportunity to anybody who can buy the scooter.

In their notification the Government of India have said that they have no machinery for the assessment of the distance. It is a very funny thing to say. I have been in the Government of India and I do not accept it that the Government does not know about the habitation of their employees. In the formulation of TA bills, in the municipal returns and in the addresses that people give as their credentials to the Government of India, all these are mentioned. How can you say that this is not known? If the municipal committee, such a small body, can locate the names and addresses of members who are residing in one place or the other even if they change their residence, to plead this inability on behalf of the Government of India does not look very convincing. But even if you keep the distance, I do not believe that you have no machinery to go into the question of deciding who really is living at a distance of 5 kilometres. This is a fact on which I would like to draw the attention of the House because this has adversely affected a large

number of people and I would certainly submit to Government that this kind of a criterion should be allowed to be retained because their whole intention in allotting scooters was to provide this facility to the distant travellers. That is the only justifiable way by which you can provide the facility for such a scarce commodity and for which a large waiting list is there.

I would submit to the Minister that he would again look into it. If they have brought this rule—probably, I do not know what difficulty the Minister has—at least they should not disturb the priority which has already been fixed. You should see that the list of priority which has already been made should not be disturbed even by this revision of the rules.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): The Minister is aware that a scooter today has become a very popular conveyance for the entire family. The man drives it, his wife sits on the back with one child in the lap and another at the back. So, the entire family moves on the scooter. What is the justification for fixing this limit of Rs. 350? Is it non-availability of scooters; if not, why not revise it to, say, 150 or even 100? If I can possibly purchase it on a family basis, let me purchase it. I would like to know what is the specific reason for it.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Industry (Shri Bibudhendra Misra): Mr. Speaker, Sir, this half-an-hour discussion is based on an unstarred Question that was answered in the House some time back. So far as the scope of this discussion is concerned, it is very limited. It relates only to the relaxation of the 5 kilometre rule; it does not at all relate to what type or grade of employees are eligible to get a scooter from the Government quota.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: There was another starred question in this House on the subject.

Shri Bibudhendra Misra: This relates to the unstarred question. Shrimati Sinha has sought to make out a case as if the Government has made a distinction between the low-paid employees and employees drawing above Rs. 350 per mensem. Shri Banerjee has even sought to make out that it was only Class I officers who were eligible for the allotment of scooters. Both these are absolutely wrong impressions.

I would go back to the history of the case. Since the Central Government Control Order came into operation sometime in 1960, applications from the Central Government quota went on mounting and by the year 1965, it was found that the applications were somewhere in the region of 17,700 and odd—I am speaking from memory. It is very well known that the availability of scooters in the country is very small and so far as the Central Government quota is concerned, it is smaller. It is not that the entire production goes into the Central Government quota or any quota. So far as the Central Government quota is concerned, formerly, it was much less and now it is about 1060 per quarter so far as the scooters are concerned and so far as motorcycles are concerned, it is about 600 per quarter. As I was saying, the waiting list was of the order of 17,700 and odd and it was found that it is very difficult to have such a list because it is no use having a list unless you are in a position to give scooters. Therefore, there is no question of any rule. No rule has been framed. But some guide-lines must be evolved to find out what should be, under the circumstances, the best and the most equitable system of distribution of the Central Government quota. Then, the Government framed some guide-lines. As I said, there was no rule and it was, first of all, decided that only

those persons who get a salary of more than Rs. 500 should be eligible for scooters. There was some consideration behind it. It was not arbitrary; it was not muddle-headed. It was thought that the means of the person to purchase a scooter should be taken into consideration.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: The Members of Parliament also get Rs. 500.

Shri Bibudhendra Misra: I cannot say whether you get Rs. 500 only.

The means have to be taken into consideration. After all, most of the Government servants take a Government loan and the maximum loan that the Government gives is Rs. 2750. The maximum period allowed is 50 monthly instalments. There is also interest over it at the rate of 5 per cent. So, if you calculate all this, you will find that apart from other expenses on account of the payment of instalment and on account of the payment of the interest also, and there are other things also, that is, registration, insurance and other duties—I am not talking of petrol and other things—it costs a heavy amount which may run to about Rs. 100 per month. So, it was thought that a person who gets Rs. 500 will be able to have and maintain a scooter.

Then, there was a question raised in Parliament, in both the Houses, and there was also a Half-An-Hour discussion. The Members felt that this limit of Rs. 500 was too high a limit and that it should be brought down. So, it was brought down to Rs. 350. It would be wrong to say that persons who are getting below Rs. 350 are not eligible for getting scooters. I am only talking of the Central Government quota. Those persons who are getting below Rs 350 can purchase from any outside dealer. Anybody can register his name and get it from the outside dealer. There is no bar. It would be a wrong impression as if people who are getting less than Rs. 350 are completely precluded from buying the

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scooter. I am only referring to the Government quota.

There are also two other makes of scooters, apart from Lambretta and Vespa, which are cheaper and the Government quota is 100 and there is no application for them. Say, for instance, there is Fantabulus and there is the Government quota for which there is no application. The entire demand is either one of these two makes, that is, Lambretta and Vespa. Therefore, this was the reason for fixing the limit of Rs. 350.

So far as the distance of 5 Km. is concerned, it was found that it became very difficult to operate it and to administer it. It was found out from experience, that sometimes a Government servant who applies for a scooter has to wait for a period of one year or two or even three years before he gets the delivery by which time his office is changed or his residence is changed. Sometimes, it becomes more than 5 Km.; sometimes it becomes less than 5 Km. There have been cases—I do not want to go into the details—where just to become eligible for a scooter, they have given addresses saying, "I have gone now to a particular place beyond a distance of 5 Km." It is not the question of the Government not knowing as to what particular area in Delhi is at a distance of 5 Km. or not. My point is this. Is it at all desirable or possible that only because of this rule, you should evolve a vast machinery in the administrative Ministry or in the Ministry that grants scooters to find out whether the applicant is really residing at a distance of 5 Km. or not and again to check up, at the time the allotment is made, whether he is still staying at a distance beyond 5 Km. and to find out periodically whether his residence is at a distance of 5 Km? Therefore, it was decided that this rule is practically unenforceable and has no meaning and that it should go.

Mrs. Sinha raised the question about retrospective effect. So far as that question is concerned, I would go to the history and state this very briefly. First of all, when the limit of Rs. 500 was imposed, certain applications were received. I do not exactly remember the number. Later on, four months thereafter, the limit was reduced to Rs. 350. Therefore, those people who had applied earlier, i.e., those who had already applied and who were within the number of 17,000 and odd and those who were not eligible because of the pay limit of Rs. 500 but became eligible after the relaxation, made applications. Therefore at that stage it was thought proper to be because they had sent their applications already and because of the restriction that was put by the Government their names were taken out, and since the applications were there, according to the date of application they should get the priority.

The same rule has also been followed here and in this case I can tell you that after the 5-kilometre distance restriction has been removed, the total number of applications that have been received has been 1500, out of which the persons who were already in that old list of 17,000 and odd and who did not get scooter because of the restriction but who have otherwise become eligible now, number only 150.

That is the whole position.

Mr. Speaker: The House stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 11 A.M.

19.27 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, November 30, 1966 (Agrahayana 9, 1888 (Saka).