

छपरा लाइन को अगर ब्राडगेज के अन्दर कन्वर्ट कर दिया जाये तो इससे लोगों को बहुत फायदा होगा। इसलिए मैं रेलवे मिनिस्टर से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि क्या ऐसा कोई प्लान है कि यह कब तक होगा। दूसरे रीजन्स को प्रायर्टी दे रहे हैं लेकिन यह प्रायर्टी अगर बनारस छपरा लाइन को भी दे दें तो बहुत मेहरबानी होगी।]

**प्रो० मधु दण्डवते :** सवाल तृतीकोरन मद्रास लाइन के कन्वर्सन के बारे में है अगर उसको जोड़ कर सभी लाइनों के बारे में सवाल उठाया जायेंगे तो जवाब कैसे दिया जायेगा।

**SHRI BHAIKAB CHANDRA MAHANT:** Sir, may I know what is the total of the metre gauge railway lines for which there is a persistent demand for conversion into broad gauge and what is the cost involved of converting one kilometre of metre gauge into broad gauge?

**PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE:** Sir, it is a broad Question.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** This is not a question which arises out of the main question.

**श्री रामानन्द यादव :** क्या मंत्री जी यह बतायेंगे कि पहले बाराबंकी समस्तीपुर की जो लाइन थी वह ब्राडगेज लाइन बन रही है और सोनपुर साइड.....

(Interruptions)

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** This question is not arising out of the main question.

**श्री रामानन्द यादव:** आपने आ यादव को एलाउ किया इस समस्तीपुर दरभंगा के लिए सबको एलाउ किया तो हम पर आप क्यों बन्धन लगा रहे हैं (Interruptions) आप खुद थोड़ा नियम का पालन कीजिए तो हम भी करेंगे अगर आप नहीं करेंगे तो हम भी कैसे कर पायेंगे। लेकिन ठीक है अगर आप कहते हैं तो मैं बड़ जाता हूँ।

### Shortage of Soda Ash

»3. SHRI R. R. MORARKA:

SHRI GHOSH MOHIUDDIN SHEIKH: SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-PATRO:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM, CHEMICALS and FERTILISERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the high-power Committee appointed to go into all aspects of soda ash shortage, has submitted its report;

(b) if so, what are its salient features; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to stop the periodic shortages of soda ash?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM, CHEMICALS AND FERTILISERS (SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) This will be considered on receipt and examination of the report which is expected by the end of January, 1979.

**SHRI R. R. MORARKA:** May I know what are the reasons for the current shortage of soda ash and as a result of this shortage what has been the increase in the price of soda ash?

**SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA:** Sir, the whole question about the reasons for the shortage of soda ash is under scrutiny of this committee. It has really been a baffling question. The rate of production has almost been at par with 1966-67. But the market trends indicate the hike in price from Rs. 1100/- to about Rs. 3000/- This concerns the Government deeply and, therefore, we have taken a number of The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri R. R. Morarka.

intermediary steps even before this committee sends its report. Firstly, we have decided to import 20,000 tonnes of soda ash, 10,000 tonnes dense and 10,000 tonnes light, through the main consumer organisations such as All India Syndicate Manufacturers Association and All India Glass Manufacturers Association. Secondly, we have got 800 tonnes of soda ash released through the National Consumer Cooperative Federation for distribution through their network of fair price shops and Super Bazars in two kilogram packets so that the housewife and the washerman whose requirement of this particular commodity is very small, can get it. Thirdly, we have made arrangements with the mills to allocate 400 tonnes per month to the National Consumer Cooperative Federation for this type of distribution in two kilogram packets.

R. MORARKA: May I know what would be the price of the imported soda ash and what arrangements are being made to distribute this imported soda ash to the public?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: The Associations have been asked to import it. They are the various agents of the C.P.C. They have been given two concessions. On the dense soda ash, the concessional duty is 5 per cent and on the light soda ash the import duty is 35 per cent. The countervailing duty is 10 per cent as before. Therefore the price of the imported soda ash is expected to be between Rs. 501- and Rs. 1001 - more than the ex-factory price of about Rs. 1100)-. That will be the actual price in the market. As against the prevailing price in the open market to the small consumers it even touched about Rs. 3,000]- per tonne

SHRI GHOUSE MOHIUDDIN SHEIKH: Sir, it was stated that the shortage of this soda ash is only because of non-supply of railway wagons and the raw materials to the factories. What are the steps that the Government has taken to meet the shortage of transport, that is, to supply the wagons to the factories? Sir, the other point is that

there is no statutory control of price and distribution in this item. What steps the Government has taken in this respect? The other thing is that there is the increased production capacity. What steps are taken to increase the production? I want answers to these three questions from the hon. Minister.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Sir, I must at the outset admit that transport does not appear to be a reason for this shortage. The factories have been arguing that way. But we have not accepted that position, and the expert committee has been asked to find out the real reasons behind this type of market trends. If transport would have been the main reason, even in the Saurashtra area, the price of soda ash would not have risen to that extent because by road transport things could have been moved. Moreover, the total stock position with the factories does not indicate any higher inventory than the last year's inventory. Therefore, those reasons are not acceptable to the Government. But we await the recommendations of the high-powered committee to find out and tell us what exactly are the reasons. So far as the question about high prices of the raw materials is concerned, I am afraid even that is not a question because the ex-factory price has continued to remain to rule between Rs. 1050 and Rs. 1100 and odd. Therefore, we cannot say that the prices of raw materials or other prices have tended to increase them at what the prevailing market prices are.

SHRI GHOUSE MOHIUDDIN SHEIKH: Are you having consultations with the users' associations?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Yes. We are in constant consultation with the All-India Silicate Manufacturers' Association, the All-India Glass Manufacturers' Association, and the All-India Soap and Detergent Manufacturers Association. These are the bulk consumers of these commodities—

dities. We are in consultation with them and trying to find out the methods to solve the problem. So far as statutory control in price is concerned, it is true that so far it is not so. We are not taking a hasty steps because of this committee, and as soon as this committee comes forward with its recommendations, if necessary and if the market does not properly behave, and if we come to the conclusion that it is all done in a manner of speculation and looting the consumer, something of a statutory price control will have to be brought in. But it can only be at that point of time when we have this Committee's recommendations. So far as production capacity is concerned, additional licensing capacity has been there for more than one or two years. We have about 600,000 tonnes of more sanctioned capacity. But it will take time to come up. We are trying to follow up with these people who have these licences so that additional capacity also comes into the picture.

SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-PATRO: Sir, the causes of such a cyclic pattern of shortage is well known to the Government. Yet, a high-powered committee has been formed, and they have been asked to go into that matter. This committee was to give its report by the 31st October, but now the time has been extended till January, as the Minister just now reported. Sir, as a temporary measure, what has been done is that these two big consumers—the silicate and the glass manufacturers' associations have been allowed to get it on O.G.L. through the C.P.C. But they have not yet got what was promised to them, namely, full duty free import of soda ash from foreign countries. It was subsequently changed to concessional duty free. Why was this change made? Secondly, is it already imported and, if not, when is this going to be imported? Is it true that the landed price of the imported commodity will be higher than what is now being given by the producers

of soda ash? In that case would they be able to cope with their industries and is it not true that they will be suffering when the prices of the landed commodity will be much higher than those at which it is now being sold? Though they will be lower than the ruling prices, yet they will be much higher. Therefore, may I know why this change was made from the duty free to the concessional duty free and why should not the original position be restored, which was the promise made to them, namely, that it will be fully duty free.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Sir, the whole question has been given very deep consideration. It is not correct to say that the landed price of the imported commodity will be very much higher than the ex-factory price prevailing today. As I said, this will be only Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 more than the internal price, whereas it will be fifty per cent or almost fifty per cent of the ruling market price. Therefore, the Government have seen to it that it does not lose the total revenue on it. Moreover, this itself will be a great relief to these people because they will be getting it almost at fifty per cent of the ruling price. It is true that the Committee was to have submitted its report by the 31st October, 1978. The Committee has on it very top people from the Bureau of Costs and Prices, from the D.G.T.D. and from other organisations and they have lots of other things to do and they have asked for a little more time. We are more than sure and fully convinced that by the end of January, 1979 their final report will be received.

SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-PATRO: Why was the change made from the total duty free to concessional duty free?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: I have told you that we found that it will be unfair to give such a profit to these people, these private people.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KUL-KARNI: Sir, when this question, was

brought before the House through a Calling Attention Motion in the last session, the Minister himself assured that 20,000 tonnes will be imported immediately. Later on the news was floated that the import has been abandoned. Now the Minister says that import is a fact and imports are going to be received. In view of this, may I ask the Minister what the effect is going to be on the industry, particularly the small scale industry? Whatever little you have done is quite a good effort but whether it has reached the market, I do not know. As far as small industries are concerned, I am still receiving complaints from them to the effect that the big industrialists and bureaucrats in your Ministry are still tinkering with the problem, though an intelligent man, like Mr. Bahuguna, who is a Minister and controlling the Ministry, is quite aware of these things and quite competent to put a check on them. So, I would like to know how far these things will go on rambling like this and ultimately when will the imports arrive. So, a crash programme of imports through whatever sources you may like, has to be initiated in order to mitigate the problem. In this connection, you will bear with me if I allege that the orientation of your Janata Government is of traders and the necessity to tackle this type of a malady is to provide for total control on distribution, but that has not been done and your economy being a totally trader oriented economy it is coming to your way. Mr. Bahuguna, you are not of that flock and you have to rise to the occasion and see that the goods reach the small industry.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Sir, a part of the question of the hon. Member is a sore reminder of the fact that in spite of his goodwill for the Janata Party in Maharashtra, this House does not leave him.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI: It is not for the Janata

Party in Maharashtra, it is for the programme-oriented party. The Maharashtra party is a programme-oriented party. The C.P.M. is there, the P.W.P. is there. It is not the Jana Sangh that we are siding with.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: I will correct myself for his love for the programmes which we have also shared with him in Maharashtra. But he appears to have lost faith in us here.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI: We brought cement under control. We did not give it to traders. You have to follow that example.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: I would not like to comment on what is happening to cement under control. I would leave it at that. But the important point is that it is not correct to say . . .

श्री प्रेम मनोहर : सब से अधिक  
लोक जन सीमेंट में है तो बम्बई में ही है।

श्री अरविन्द गणेश कुलकर्णी : आप  
अपनी ५० पी० की प्राक्कम को सात्व करो।

Don't bother about our problems, you solve your problems in U.P.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. Minister reply to the question?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Sir, soda ash problem is an all-India problem and I am sure that I would have the assistance of Apa Sahib also' in solving it. It is not correct to say that we have delayed the import of soda ash. Soda ash is a commodity which is selling at such a premium in India in an indiscriminate manner giving unintended profit to some people. We have to take plenty of precautions . . .

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI: How many months will you take?

SHRI RAMANAND YADAV; Why is it happening? It is happening because of your inefficiency.

श्री सीताराम केसरी : बहुगुणा जी तो सर्वगुणसम्पन्न हैं ।

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA; I admit; I have no objection to hon. Member's views.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KUL-KARNI: He is not inefficient; his company is a wrong company; that is all.

MR. CHAIRMAN; Now, let us not go into it. The hon. Minister may reply to the question.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: All I would like to say is . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN; If you go into political arena, it will be difficult. You reply only to the point.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Partly political and partly non-political; but I will commit myself only to non-political part of it. Sir, imports are being made through the association so that distribution does not cause a problem and yet we have to take a number of guarantees from the association that they will give it to everybody. All these discussions have taken time and we have reached the journey's end.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KUL-KARNI: The basic point is whether goods have been imported and they have landed here and whether there is any possibility of total control. This is the basic point which the Janata Party has forgotten.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: I have already told the House that after receiving the report of this Committee, the Government will have to consider whether to put control or to bring the whole thing under the

Essential Commodities Act. All these points will be decided.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KUL-KARNI: What about imports? Have they come?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Imports have already been ordered. The All-India Glass Manufacturers' Association have said that they expect these imports in a couple of months. So far as silicate is concerned, they have floated tenders.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Sir, the question of shortage of soda ash was discussed during the last session also at some length and the hon. Minister had stated that the shortage was artificially created. He agrees even now, he says. And on that, Sir, he promised to set up an inquiry which would go into the reasons why and how that artificial scarcity had come about. I do not know whether it was included in the terms of reference of this so-called high-power committee to go into the question and find out how and in what way all the bungling has taken place which has resulted in this shortage. Sir, so far as I am aware, the composition and the terms of reference of the committee are neither suited nor are drawn up with a view to finding out the truth of the matter. I would, therefore, like to ask the hon. Minister—the way in which he started tackling this question was quite satisfactory to all concerned—if the promises and commitments made by such an energetic and efficient Minister like him on the floor of the House can be diluted by the bureaucrats, what relief can the people expect in such a situation? He had promised straightaway imports but the imports have been delayed. In the meantime, the price has gone up by Rs. 1,000 or more a tonne. It was about Rs. 1600 or Rs. 1800 at that time. Now, it is about Rs. 3200. He says he cannot allow duty-free imports because the margin is big. But the margin is big because the imports

hive not come. There have been no effective steps to check the people who have been bungling. Now, the high-powered Committee is going into the question of artificial shortage. Who has created this scarcity? Who are responsible for it and what action is being taken against them? Lastly, I would like to know whether the standing committee which has been set up has been functioning because if my information is correct, it has not. It has met once.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Sir, a standing committee has been constituted and it is functioning. It is not correct to say that it has not met till date. It has met once.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Once is not enough.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: I agree. Right thereafter, there have been follow-up decisions and informal discussions between the representatives of the industry and the Ministry. So far as the terms of reference are concerned, I would read out para two of the notification. It says:

"It has, therefore, been decided to set up a high-powered committee to go into all aspects of production, movement, marketing of soda ash with special reference to the causes of the current shortage."

It is included in that.

"... and the reasons for the cyclical change referred to above and suggest ways and means of preventing the recurrence of such a situation in the soda ash industry."

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: But only one Member, the Chairman, is a non-official. All others are just officials and most of them are people who will have to give lots of answers for all the bungling that has taken place.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: I am sorry to say that the composition of the Committee, in the opinion of the Government, is the best possible under the circumstances looking at it from all the angles involved in the

question. However, it is a matter of opinion.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: Why didn't you associate some public men?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: We need not have. So far as the question of imports is concerned, the hon. Member is quite right. It has taken time to settle this. But I could not help it.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: Sir, the question is, either there is a shortage or there is no shortage. On the 26th October, the hon. Minister himself has stated that the shortage in the soda ash industry is artificial and he has stepped out at the industry for creating this artificial shortage and doubling the price. Now, who are the producers? The Tatas, the Birlas and the Sahu Jains. They control nearly 90 per cent of the production. On 25th October, 1977, it has been mentioned, the price was Rs. 56. It has gone up during the time when he has been the Minister and, on 25th October, 1978, it was Rs. 156. The question is whether the shortage is artificial. If the shortage is artificial, as the hon. Minister himself has stated in this House and reiterated at another meeting in Bombay, what steps have been taken against the big industrialists? What is the need of Import? Import has become a panacea for the Janata Government. There are plenty of imports. Mr. Birju Patnaik has decided to import coking coal from Australia. This is a shocking thing. Mr. Bahuguna says here that there is artificial shortage and at the same time allows hundreds of tonnes to be imported when this could be manufactured in the country and the needs could have been met. What steps have been taken against the people who are creating artificial shortage and making fabulous profits? What about channelling all the imports through the STC?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: The imports have been channelled through the STC and these associations are the agents of the STC because they

eo-ld get a cheaper import of soda ash from various sources. So far as the other question is concerned, the hon. Member is rightly angry. The soda ash industry has not come under our control as yet. Market appears to be tending in its own directions. Speaking (or myself, I do not believe that there is shortage of production till date.

But this market speculation is causing all the trouble. We have not been able to do it so far, but meanwhile I have told him what steps we have taken to see that small 2 Kg. packets go through the fair price shops. Some quantities are taken from these factories compulsorily. I also have a promise that after we have received the Committee's report, which will be sometime in January, we will come to final decision on the final shape and method of distribution of these commodities.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: Will you consider take-over of the three units?

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Take over will not meet the shortage meanwhile.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: Full capacity will be utilised.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: Capacity is fully utilized.

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : श्रीमान्, हमारे मंत्री महोदय ने बहुत चतुराई से उत्तर दिया है। इस संबंध में पिछले सत्र में भी प्रश्न उठा था। आपने एक हाई पावर कमेटी बनाई है। मैं यह बात साफ़ साफ़ कहना चाहता हूँ कि इस विषय पर सदन में बहस होनी चाहिए। मैं समझना हूँ कि जिन लोगों से सोडा एश का छुट्टिम अभाव पैदा किया है वे सब काला-बाजार करने वाले लोग हैं। ये लोग ऐसे हैं जिन्होंने जान-बूझकर सोडा एश का अभाव पैदा किया है। ये लोग हाई पावर कमेटी से मिल गये हैं। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या कारण है कि यह कमेटी बनने के बाद उसकी तरफ़ से बार बार

समय आया जा रहा है? हमारे माननीय मंत्री जो उस कमेटी का समय बढ़ाते जा रहे हैं। मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि इस कमेटी से तत्काल रिपोर्ट मांगी जाय और तत्काल उस पर निर्णय लिया जाय।

SHRI H. 1ST. BAHUGUNA: I admit the anxiety on the part of the Member to be great and I hope the Committee will give its report at the earliest.

SHRI B. N. BANERJEE: Sir, my question is specific. I would like to know; What is the total requirement of soda ash for this country? What was the production of soda ash in 1977-78 and how much had to be imported? What would be the production in this year 1978-79? What is the quantity to be imported? What steps are being taken by Government to see that in future soda ash is not to be imported? What is the usual price of soda ash? What is the present price and what would be the price of the imported product? These are all specific questions.

SHRI H. N. BAHUGUNA: The last question I remember the best. Therefore, I would answer it first. The imported price will be about Rs. 50 to 100 more than the ex-factory price of the Indian manufacturers on which people are getting their soda ash.

The organised industry is getting soda ash of light and dense varieties

So far as the question relating to recurrence of this situation is concerned, we have taken note of the fact. The Committee will also give us recommendations and we will come out with what steps we propose to take.

So far as the question of the agisting capacity and increased demand is concerned, I believe that there is a need of 5.4 lakh tonnes more and that capacity has been allowed, licensed for coming into production. The Government believe that they would try to expedite as far as it can, to bring about this capacity also into production. The Govern-

ment also believe, that soda ash is a thing which goes to every house and every home. Therefore, it is not just easy dealing with these industries, but it has to be done on a larger scale, and I hope the co-operative movement will come to the rescue of the Government in helping it to reach everybody in the country.

पिछड़े आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में रेल लाइनों का बिछाया जाना

\*4. श्री हरिशंकर भाबड़ा : +

श्री कलराज मिश्र :

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर :

क्या रेल मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या सरकार चालू वर्ष के दौरान पिछड़े आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में नई रेल लाइनें बिछाने के किसी प्रस्ताव पर विचार कर रही है ; और

(ख) यदि हां, तो उसका व्यौरा क्या है ?

विवरण

(क) और (ख) 1978-79 के पूरक अनुदानों के माध्यम से, उत्तर-पूर्वी क्षेत्र में निम्नलिखित छः नई रेल लाइनों के निर्माण के लिए संसद का अनुमोदन प्राप्त करने का विचार है :—

लाइन का नाम	सेवित राज्य	लंबाई (कि०मी०)	लागत (करोड़ रुपयों में)
1. गुवाहाटी-बर्नीहाट (बी०ला०)	असम/मेघालय	28.21	8.20
2. धर्मनगर-कुमारघाट (मी०ला०)	त्रिपुरा	33.50	9.67
3. सिलचर-जिरिबाम (मी०ला०)	असम/मणिपुर	50.36	12.13
4. बालोपाड़ा-भालुकपोंग (मी०ला०)	असम/अरुणाचल	33.45	4.70
5. आमगुड़ी-तुली (मी०ला०)	असम/नागालैंड	17.07	4.83
6. लालाघाट-भरवी (मी०ला०)	असम/मिज़ोरम	48.77	10.76
	जोड़		50.29

पिछड़े और जनजातीय क्षेत्रों में निम्नलिखित रेल लाइनों का निर्माण किया जा रहा है :—

1. नडियाद-कापड़वंज-मोडासा, गुजरात में ।
2. जबपुरा-बांसयानी, उड़ीसा में ।
3. वाणी-चनाका, महाराष्ट्र ।
4. नडिकुडे-बीबीनगर, आन्ध्र प्रदेश में ।
5. कराइला रोड-जयन्ती, उत्तर प्रदेश और मध्य प्रदेश में ।
6. भद्राचलम-मानगुरु, आन्ध्र प्रदेश में ।

The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Harishankar Bhabhda.

[ ] English translation.

\$ [Laying of railway lines in backward tribal areas

\*4. SHRI HARISHANKAR  
BHABHDA: SHRI KALRAJ  
MISHRA: SHRI JAGDISH  
PRASAD: MATHUR:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to lay new railway lines in the backward tribal areas during the current year; and

(b) if so, what are the detail\* thereof?]

रेल मंत्री (प्रो० मधु दण्डवते) : (क)  
और (ख) एक विवरण सभा पटल  
पर रख दिया गया है ।