

**Proceedings of the Fourteenth Session of the First Assam Legislative Assembly,
assembled under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935.**

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong, at 2 P. M., on Friday, the 10th March, 1944.

PRESENT

The Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, Speaker, in the Chair, the ten Hon'ble Ministers and thirty-nine hon. Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(To which oral answers were given)

Government agents for purchasing paddy and rice: market rate of paddy and rice

Babu BIPIN BEHARI DAS asked:

*22. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The names of Government agents employed to purchase paddy and rice in the Surma Valley Districts?

(b) The market rate of paddy and rice in the Surma Valley Districts during the period from the 15th January to 31st January 1944?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

22. (a)—(i) Messrs. Surma Valley Food-grain Syndicate; and
(ii) Messrs. Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate.

(b)—The rates in the main markets—Silchar and Sylhet for rice and paddy varied from Rs.18-2-0 to Rs.17-12-0 and Rs.11 to Rs.9-14-0 and Rs.19-8-0 to Rs.19-12-0 and Rs.11 to Rs.11-4-0 respectively.

Babu BIPIN BEHARI DAS: Will Government please state who are the members of this Syndicate?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am not sure who are the partners.

(Starred questions Nos.23-24 were not put and answered as the questioner Maulavi Mabarak Ali was absent).

Re Security Political Prisoner Achintya Bhattacharjee

†Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked?

*25. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether Achintya Bhattacharyee, a Security political prisoner in Sylhet Jail, has been suffering from gastric ulcer?

(b) Whether they propose to release him for treatment outside?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

25. (a)—Yes, from Dyspepsia according to report of the Superintendent of Jail.
(b)—Matter is under consideration of Government.

† The question was put by Srijut Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri on authorisation.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : When can we expect an order ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I have called for a detailed report from the medical authority of the Jail, and on getting his full report I will decide.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Are Government aware that there are several political prisoners ailing from some disease or other in Sylhet Jail ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I am not aware, Sir.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Have Government seen the allegations that were published in the *Janasakti* ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I have not seen the *Janasakti*. Sir. If my hon. Friend will give me the names of the security prisoners who are suffering, I will make an enquiry.

Re Security Prisoner Homeswar Chowdhury of Pathsala

†Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

*26. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether Homeswar Chaudhury of Pathsala in Kamrup District, now a Security Prisoner in Sylhet Jail, has broken his knee ?
- (b) Whether he has been crippled for ever ?
- (c) Whether he applied for parole in November 1943 ?
- (d) If so, why his application has not been granted ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

26. (a) & (b)—Government has no knowledge of it, but a report has been called for from the District authorities since notice of these questions.

(c) & (d)—Yes, he applied for parole in October 1943, not on account of the alleged breaking of knee, but to sell his Pharmacy and to attend "Annaprasana" ceremony of his son.

On objection from the local authorities, and as the grounds of release were not deemed sufficient the prayer was rejected.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Are Government aware that this prisoner has actually broken his knee in the jail ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : We have had no report, Sir. As I have already stated, as soon as I got notice of this question, I called for a report.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Is it a fact that the Superintendent of Jail has recommended that he must be X-rayed either in Dibrugarh or in Calcutta ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : No such report has arrived, at least to my hand, up till now. If the Superintendent of Jail has already recommended, surely, I will take action on that recommendation.

Re Political Prisoners

‡Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*27 Will Government be pleased to lay on the table the names of the political prisoners as on the 1st February 1944 showing their (i) place of residence (ii) names of the Jails where they have been kept (iii) allowance, if any, granted to them and (iv) their age ?

*28. Will Government be pleased to state whether the standard of food and quantity of food for the same class of prisoners are the same in all the jails ?

† The question was put by Srijut Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri on authorisation.

‡ The questions were put and answered under Assembly rule 38 although the questioner was absent.

- *29. Will Government be pleased to state—
 (a) Whether they propose to keep the political prisoners in their own Districts ?
 (b) If not, why not ?
- *30. Will Government be pleased to state—
 (a) Since when Srijut Achintya Kumar Bhattacharyya of Silchar, now in Sylhet Jail, was admitted in the Jail Hospital ?
 (b) How long he was in the Hospital ?
 (c) The disease he is suffering from ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

27.—Government are not prepared to publish these particulars of security prisoners, though as they have indicated from time to time they will furnish information in any specific case to an enquirer who has grounds for asking it. The total number of security prisoners is now 190, of whom 66 are in receipt of allowances, which ordinarily range from Rs.5 to Rs.10 for their personal needs and from Rs.25 to Rs.60 for families.

28.—The standards of quantity and quality are the same in all jails.

29. (a)—No.

(b)—The main reason is that such prisoners usually have more or less local influence, which must prove an embarrassment to the Jail staff and, possibly in some cases, to themselves.

30. (a)—On 14th May 1943.

(b)—Government understand, he has since that date been under hospital treatment.

(c)—Dyspepsia.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Will the Hon'ble Prime Minister be pleased to state, how many security prisoners have been released ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : As I have already stated the other day, the number released will be over 250. I gave definite answer to this, three days back.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Have they been released unconditionally or released on parole ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Those who have been released on parole have been released for a very limited period and have not been included in the number. Amongst those who have been released, some have been home-interned. More than 60 per cent. of the total number have been released.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Are not all these persons released unconditionally ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Some have been released unconditionally.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : May I know how many have been released unconditionally ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I am not sure ; I want notice.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI : Did Government give any allowance to Ibrahim and Mubarak Ali ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I cannot answer that new question. I want to know whether these political prisoners have applied for any allowance or not ?

Khan Bahadur Maulavi MAHMUD ALI : Yes they have.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I shall enquire into it.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: With regard to Question 28, may I know what is the rate of diet allowance to security prisoners?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Sayid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am afraid, I must want notice.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Has any allowance been granted to any of the M. L. A. security prisoners?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Sayid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I want notice. Because these points were not raised in the questions I did not look into it.

Subdivisional Food Committee of Barpeta

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS asked:

*31. Will Government be pleased to state whether the Subdivisional Officer of the Barpeta Subdivision has given due consideration to the advice given to him in the matters of supply and distribution by the Subdivisional Food Committee?

*32. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether the Subdivisional Food Committee of Barpeta has recently passed a resolution expressing its uselessness to continue unless its position in relation to the Subdivisional Officer is improved?

(b) Whether the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup, the Director of Supply and the Government of Assam have received copies of the said resolution?

(c) If so, what step the Government have taken in the matter?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied.

31. Certainly the Subdivisional Officer will give due consideration.

32. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes.

(c)—The Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup has been asked to see that there is co-operation between the Subdivisional Officer and the members of the Committee.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: But he has not.

†Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge enquire whether due attention and consideration were given to the advice given by the Subdivisional Food Committee?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have received complaints that Food Committees have not been called in various Subdivisions and Districts. I will look into this. Do I take it, Sir, that in Barpeta the committee sat but the recommendation of the committee was not accepted by the Subdivisional Officer?

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: Yes, Sir.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I will enquire into this matter, Sir.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: What was the recommendation, Sir?

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: In matters of supply and distribution, the Subdivisional Food Committee gave certain directions to the Subdivisional Officer but he did not follow the directions.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: What are those recommendations.

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS: I cannot say, Sir, what are those specific recommendations.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Sir, are the Government aware that there are no rules framed for guidance in this matter and so there are certain loopholes in the constitution of these Food Committees ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : If there are loopholes, I will see that these are remedied.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Do Government consider the necessity of framing some rules for the working of these Food Committees ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I will do it, Sir.

Srijut GHANASHYAM DAS : Sir, I could not follow the reply of question No.33 (c).

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : The Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup, has been asked to see that there is co-operation between the Subdivisional Officer and the members of the committee.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: As regards question No.32 (a), may I know Sir, the circumstances, under which the Subdivisional Food Committee passed the resolution ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : It has already become apparent from the question No.31 and replies to supplementaries.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : The Hon'ble the Premier must have seen the resolution on the record. May I get text of the resolution, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I have not got the text of the resolution just now with me, Sir.

Inclusion of the name of Srijut Lakhesvar Barua in the Food Committee of Dibrugarh

†Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

*33. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Why Srijut Lakhesvar Barua, the Congress M.L.A., of Dibrugarh has not been included in the Food Committee there ?

(b) Whether they propose to include him in the Food Committee now ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

33. (a)&(b)—A reference has since been made to the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur and action will be taken on hearing from him.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Was not the appointment of the committee made by the Government of Assam and published in the *Assam Gazette* ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, certain principles are laid down by Government.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Was not there a condition, Sir, that all the local M. L. As. should be included in the committee ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, but through oversight not only some Indian Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of the Legislative Council but also some European Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of the Legislative Council have been excluded. We have since remedied some omission. We have asked the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, to state why Srijut Lakhesvar Barua's name was not included in the list and on hearing from him, I will take proper action on this matter.

† The question was put by Srijut Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri on authorisation.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Are these mistakes due to the omission of the names of the Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of the Legislative Council in the recommendations of the District Officer?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sometimes the omissions occur either through oversight or sometimes through want of knowledge of the location of a particular Member. For example, I can mention that Khan Bahadur Dewan Eklmur Roza Chaudhury's name has been omitted from the Sylhet Committee's list because his ancestral home is not in the Sylhet Sadar Sub-division. Such things do occur, Sir,

(Starred Questions Nos. 34 and 35 standing in the names of Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee and Maulavi Mabarak Ali respectively were not put and answered as the questioners were absent.)

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(To which answers were laid on the table)

Distribution of Standard cloth in the Province

Maulana ABDUL HAMID KHAN asked:

20. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The quantity (in yards) of standard cloth supplied in each District of the Province? (Figures to be given District by District separately.)
- (b) How many yards of standard cloth have been given up till now in the Dhubri South Bank of the Goalpara District?
- (c) Whether it is a fact that no standard cloth or very little quantity has been supplied to Fakirganj, Buka Kali and Medotari?
- (d) If so, do Government propose to issue special order to the Deputy Commissioner, Goalpara, to take steps for supplying Standard cloth in those Elakas?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

20. (a)—About six million yards of Standard cloth were received upto 31st December 1943 and the whole quantity were distributed to every District according to the population basis.

(b)—75,298 yards.

(c)—Sufficient quantity of standard cloth has been supplied for distribution to the South Salmara Police Station under which the villages referred to fall.

(d)—Does not arise.

Mr. D. B. H. MOORE: Can Government give us any indication as to when supplies will be available and whether sufficient quantities of Standard cloths will be made available for our tea garden labourers?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, in reply I have mentioned that about six million yards of Standard cloth were received upto 31st December 1943. Up-to-date figures bring these quantities to about eight million yards. I have about a fortnight ago asked all the Deputy Commissioners to issue Standard cloth freely and not to insist on any certificate of poverty. I am perfectly sure that if the tea industry approach the different Deputy Commissioners they will have their full share.

Mr. N. DAWSON: Will the Hon'ble the Premier take it from me that so far as the North Lakhimpur Circle is concerned the only supply of Standard cloth, so far received amounts to precisely 3 pairs of cloth per garden?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am sorry to hear that North Lakhimpur gardens have not got any appreciable quantity of Standard cloth. However, I will ask the Deputy Commissioner to expedite distribution, because he has got a big stock now.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: In view of these inadequate supplies, can the Hon'ble the Premier indicate when adequate supplies will be forthcoming?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : The Government of India was good enough to promise about 50 million yards of Standard cloth for the Province of Assam to be delivered up to July 1944. Of these, we have received 8 million yards up-to-date.

Mr. F. W. BLANNERHASSETT : When was that promise made, Sir.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : It was some 5 or 6 months ago, Sir.

Mr. F. W. BLANNERHASSETT : I thought it was longer ago than that.

Ban on the Indian National flag in Sylhet District

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

21. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether the Indian National flag has been banned in Sylhet District ?

(b) Whether it has been banned in any part of India ?

22. Do Government propose to withdraw the ban on the National flag ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

21. (a)—Display of the Congress Flag has been prohibited in Sylhet District.

(b)—Government have no knowledge and cannot answer for what is done outside

Assam.

22.—The future of the tricolour flag adopted as the emblem of the Congress will depend upon that body remaining, or ceasing to be, an unlawful association.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Do I understand, Sir, that the display of the Indian National flag has been banned only in Sylhet District and in no other part of Assam ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Sir, this matter was thoroughly discussed on an Adjournment Motion moved by Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy and I do not want to reiterate the replies again. The answer to this question is given in the reply, Sir.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : The reply is "The future of the tricolour flag adopted as the emblem of the Congress will depend upon that body remaining, or ceasing to be, an unlawful association." Do we understand, Sir, that the tricolour flag has been banned because the Congress has been declared unlawful ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I have said that this is a symbol of an association which has been declared unlawful.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Sir, if the banning of the flag is due to the fact that the Congress has been declared unlawful, it must have been banned throughout India.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Sir, I am only to reply what is happening in the Province and I have no knowledge of the doings outside.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Is it banned in any District other than Sylhet, Sir ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Yes, throughout Assam.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Has Congress been declared illegal ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : No, only the Working Committee.

Eradication of Water Hyacinth, excavation of Sunoru river and dredging of big Dighies in Baniyachong

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

23. Will Government be pleased to state—

Whether any plan has been devised by them (i) to eradicate water hyacinth from big Dighies of Baniyachong, (ii) excavate the Sunoru river for drainage (iii) to dredge the big Dighies of Baniyachong ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied :

23.—The reply is in the negative.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : May I know from the Hon'ble Education Minister why the Government does not think it necessary to devise some means to make improvement of the sanitary condition of Baniyachong people ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : Strictly speaking, Sir, this question does not come within my portfolio.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : I think this ought to be under Public Health Department, Sir.

The Hon'ble Miss MAVIS DUNN : It should be properly under Local Bodies.

Babu BIPIN BEHARI DAS : Are we to understand that it is not the duty of Government to supply pure water to Baniyachong ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY : I think it comes under Public Health ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I am sorry to find that some of my Hon'ble Colleagues are shirking responsibility, one after another. Therefore I will reply to the question.

Government's responsibility, within their funds, is to supply pure water in the villages. In pursuance of the policy which was adopted not now, but about 15 years ago, some pure water source was supplied to many villages. In Baniyachong, which is a very low-lying area, no tank or well could be excavated but some tube-wells were provided and I personally saw a few tube-wells in last December.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : May I know, Sir, whether Government will devise some means to eradicate water-hyacinth in Baniyachong village which has become a place for mosquito and other things ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : The hon. Member is perfectly aware that we have got a law on our statute book wherein the primary responsibility of eradicating water-hyacinth has been laid on Local Bodies. Baniyachong is under Habiganj Local Board and it is for that Board to start any plan for wholesale eradication and open out drainage channel in that village. But so far as Public Health is concerned, Government has taken up those schemes recommended by our experts for getting rid of mosquito pest from that area to stamp out malaria. The special officer at Baniyachong is a senior Assistant Surgeon who is trained in malaria.

Haltugaon and Kachugaon Forest Divisions

Raja AJIT NARAYAN DEB of Sidli asked :

24. With reference to the *ad-interim* reply given to Questions Nos. 90, 91 and 92 at the last November Session of the Assembly, will Government be pleased to state now—

- (a) The total number of coupes (*Sal* and soft wood) sold to contractors in the two Forest Divisions of Haltugaon and Kachugaon in the District of Goalpara during the period beginning from April 1940 to March 1943 ?
- (b) The value thereof (to be shown separately) ?
- (c) The total amount of royalty realised up till now from the contractors.
- (d) The total outturn during the said period ?
- (e) The area of (i) Haltugaon and (ii) Kachugaon Forest Divisions ?
- (f) The number of ranges in each Division ?
- (g) The number of staff working therein during last year and this year in each Division ?
- (h) Whether the work in those Divisions has increased at present ?
- (i) If so, whether the staff has been increased ?
- (j) Whether it is a fact that the contractors working in the Haltugaon Division do not at present get Forest passing, transit pass, depot passing and reply of letters in time ?

(k) If so, why ?
 (l) Whether the contractors working in these two Divisions are allowed to despatch timber outside the Province of Assam ?

(m) If so, under what conditions ?

(n) The quantity allowed for—

(i) private sale inside the Province and (ii) for despatch outside Assam ?

25. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether Government have allotted any forest block under Haltugaon and Kachugaon Forest Divisions to any contractor without putting it to public auction ?

(b) If so, why ?

(c) Whether the bridge pile contracts were proportionately distributed among the contractors in 1943.

26. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) What privilege, if any, has been given to the contractors working in Haltugaon and Kachugaon Forest Divisions with regard to supplying rations, kerosene, etc., to their labourers ?

(b) Whether any arrangement has been made to provide railway accommodation for bringing labourers from outside to extract timber from the forest in Haltugaon Division ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI replied :

24. (a)—The total number of coupes sold—

Kachugaon
326

Haltugaon
266

(b)—

Coupes sold for lump sums.
Price Rs.3,85,950.

Kachugaon
Monopoly *cum* royalty coupes. Monopoly fee Rs.1,71,448. The amount of royalty cannot be furnished as this involves a great deal of calculation.

Value
Rs.5,4,1615.

Haltugaon
Royalty at annas 1-6 per c.ft. in log and monopoly fee at annas 5-6 per tree for 3 soft wood coupes. The total amount cannot be furnished as this involves a great deal of calculation.

(c)—Kachugaon—Rs.7,28,957-8-3

Haltugaon—Rs.6,36,321-0-0

(d)—Kachugaon—17,23,386 c.ft.

Haltugaon—17,24,461 c.ft.

Reserves

(e)—Kachugaon—343 square miles.

Haltugaon—552 "

(f)—Number of Ranges—

Kachugaon—5.

Haltugaon—3.

Unclassed State Forests

33 square miles.

23 "

(g)—1942-43

79

1943-44

89

Haltugaon

53

58

(h) & (i)—Yes.

(j)—No. There are records to show that all the contractors were notified repeatedly to take forest passing but no response except from 2 contractors was received. All timber extracted from forests to depots are completely passed at depots month by month on previously notified dates. There are numerous instances of absence of replies to urgent communications from many contractors.

(k)—Does not arise.

(l)—Yes.

(m)—If the timber is not required by the Department to meet Defence requirements.

(n)—Kachugaon— Figures cannot be collected without much labour.

Haltugaon :—

(i)	(ii)	From December 1942 to October 1943.
325 pieces,	3,545 pieces,	
713 sleepers and	25 tons and	
15,307·8 c.ft.	92, 825·2 c.ft.	

25. (a)—*Kachugaon*.—No forest block has been allotted without auction in 1944, but certain coupes were allotted in 1943, and previous years.

Haltugaon.—Notices inviting sealed tenders for four blocks were duly advertised in the *Assam Gazette* but as no tender was received and the timbers were urgently required to meet Defence requirements, a reliable company was selected to do the forest works at the lowest possible rates, under the Departmental supervision and control.

(b)—*Kachugaon*.—Before August 1943, to avoid damage by boring insects before conversion, to a large number of windfallen trees which would have deteriorated in value if the normal procedure for public auction, *viz.*, three insertions of the notices in the *Assam Gazette* had to be gone through. In August 1943, a number of dead and windfallen coupes had to be allotted to make available at very short notice, to the Department from contractors stocks or by efficient and quick working, timber of very high priority required for Defence purposes.

Haltugaon.—As stated in 25 (a) above.

(c)—*Kachugaon*.—The principal considerations for allotment were speedy supply from ready stock or quick and efficient working.

Haltugaon.—Yes.

26. (a)—Rations have been made available to contractors for the use of their labourers at controlled rates prevailing in the district. As regards kerosene, steps have been taken to meet their requirements as far as stocks permit. Working tools such as axes, saws, saw files, saw sets, etc., have been supplied at controlled rates from Calcutta or elsewhere.

(b)—Yes. Arrangements for accommodation of sawyers from Gorakpur and for booking labourers by rails have been made.

Distribution list of controlled commodities

Babu LALIT MOHAN KAR asked :

27. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether it is a fact that the list prepared by a Food Committee regarding distribution of controlled commodities within the area under its jurisdiction, is approved by the Subdivisional Officer concerned and is subject to revision by any other authority ?

(b) Whether the Subdivisional Officer concerned is himself empowered to make subsequently any addition to, or alteration in such approved list without consulting the said Food Committee ?

(c) What are the status, rights, duties and responsibilities of the Supply Sub-Inspector in relation to the Food Committee and the Subdivisional Officer ?

(d) Whether a Supply Sub-Inspector is empowered to make any addition to, or alteration in such approved lists with or without the knowledge of the Subdivisional Officer ?

(e) Whether the Supply Sub-Inspector is subordinate to the Subdivisional Officer ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

27. (a) -Yes by the Deputy Commissioner and the Government.
 (b)—Yes. The Food Committee is an advisory body and their decisions are subject to acceptance by the Deputy Commissioner or the Subdivisional Officer as the circumstances permit.
 (c)—The Sub-Inspector is directly under the Subdivisional Officer and has nothing to do with the Food Committee.
 (d)—No.
 (e)—Yes.

Contractors or agencies for purchasing rice and paddy

Babu LALIT MOHAN KAR asked :

28. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The names of the contractors or agencies who are purchasing paddy and rice for Government in the Surma Valley Districts ?
 (b) Whether Government have given the contractors any direction as to the rate of price at which they are to purchase paddy and rice ?
 (c) If so, what is that rate ?
 (d) Whether they have fixed any rate of price at which the contractors are to supply paddy and rice to Government ?
 (e) If so, what is that rate ?
 (f) The quantity of paddy that has to be supplied to Government by the said contractors ?
 (g) What effective measures Government have taken or propose to take to check the purchases of the contractors in order to prevent them or their agents from purchasing in the name of Government greater quantity of paddy and rice than what is needed with a view to stocking the surplus for black market ?

29. Will Government be pleased to state, whether Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company and Messrs. Ispahani and Company are still in the field purchasing paddy and rice for supplying the same to any Government or association or for their own trading purpose ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

28. (a)—1. The Surma Valley Foodgrain Syndicate.
 2. Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate.
 (b)—Yes they are given ceiling rates below controlled rates from time to time under which they are to operate.
 (c)—This cannot be disclosed.
 (d)—Yes.
 (e)—The rate at which they purchase.
 (f)—No limit.
 (g)—The agents have been asked to submit daily, weekly and fortnightly purchase and delivery reports which show the quantity purchased, delivered and stock in hands.
- 29.—Messrs. Steel Brothers are the purchasing agents for 1944, and are operating only in Assam Valley. Messrs. Ispahani and Company are no longer in the field.

Re Detention of Ramesh Sarma of Tezpur

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

30. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether Ramesh Sarma of Tezpur has been detained under restriction at his own village ?

(b) If so, why ?

(c) Do they propose to release him immediately ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

30. (a)—He has not been detained, but his movements and activities have been restricted.

(b)—Because his activities were of a nature prejudicial to the war effort.

(c)—No, so long as the gentleman does not change his activities.

Number of cattle slaughtered by beef contractors

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked :

31. (a) Are Government aware that due to military demand a huge number of cattle are daily slaughtered by the beef contractors in the Province ?

(b) Will Government be pleased to lay on the table a list of contractors who supply beef to military people at different places and the quantity of meat they are to supply each month in the Province ?

(c) Will Government be pleased to state the total number of cattle slaughtered during the last 6 months for such purposes in the Province ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA replied :

31. (a)—Government are aware that military contractors buy cattle for beef purpose.

(b)—The contractors are appointed direct by military authorities ; so no list of contractors can be furnished.

(c)—Government have no information.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Has the Government taken any steps for preservation of plough cattle and cows from being slaughtered ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA : Sir, in agreement with the military an embargo has been placed on the working of plough bullocks and female goats. We have instructed the Deputy Commissioner to see that these are carried on and if necessary to place police guards in slaughter houses.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : Will the Hon'ble Minister please enquire whether a huge number of cattle are now being taken to Silchar ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA : Yes, as desired, I shall enquire.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : Are Government aware that due to military supply dearth of cattle has been increased ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA : It is not entirely due to military purchases but it is due to transport difficulties.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Sir, a large number of cattle including cows and plough cattle, are brought to Gauhati for supply to the military Department there and Shillong. Has the Deputy Commissioner any authority to seize these plough cattle or cows and remove them from the contractors' hands ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA : We have instructed the Deputy Commissioner to see that bullocks and cows are not sold to the military.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : When they are actually brought for supply to the military, has the Deputy Commissioner any authority to seize the plough cattle or cows ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA : Yes, Sir, we have asked the Deputy Commissioner to seize them.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : May I know, Sir, whether the Government have empowered the Deputy Commissioner to seize those cattle ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA : Yes, Sir, we have directed the Deputy Commissioner to seize those cattle.

**Statement *re* the Resolution for inclusion of the Ahom Community
among the recognised minorities for the future Indian Constitution.**

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, before taking up the business of the day may I make one statement with your permission? The fateful Resolution *regarding the separation of the Ahom Community will be taken up on the 13th of March next. On the last occasion when it was taken up I made a request to the hon. Mover of the Resolution not to move the Resolution in view of the fact that a large number of caste Hindu Members of the Assam Valley who are certainly interested in the question have been detained as security prisoners but the hon. Mover did not listen to my request. Now, may I request the Hon'ble Prime Minister to release the caste Hindu Members of the Assam Valley so that they may take part in the discussion of the Resolution on the 13th and 23rd March, and also to withdraw the internment order against some of the Members of the Legislative Assembly who have been released?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: As I have already mentioned the cases of all the individual security prisoners, whether they are Members of the Legislative Assembly or non-Members of the Legislative Assembly are being reviewed periodically by me and a large number of them has been already released—both Members of the Legislative Assembly and non-Members of the Legislative Assembly. But according to the reports of the district authorities as well as owing to the past activities of some of them I have not been able to release all. I am not in a position to state on the floor of the House whether I will be able to release any to enable them to come to Shillong, as requested by my hon. Friend, Srijut Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Sir, I want that they should be released only for those two days and even if the Hon'ble Premier or the Government does not consider it safe to release them altogether will he allow them to come under police escort?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have already given permission to those Members of the Legislative Assembly who have been released or interned on application to come to attend the Session.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: I want to know if those who are in Jail can be released or allowed to come under police escort?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I cannot make any statement about this now, Sir.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: I hope that the Hon'ble Premier will consider this matter and take action in time.

**Government Motion *re* separation of the dual functions performed by the
Motor Transport Controller**

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House recommends that the dual functions now performed by the Provincial Motor Transport Controller, of doing motor control work and also managing the fleet of lorries of the Assam Transport Organisation be separated and that the Provincial Motor Transport Controller be given a separate and necessary establishment, while the present Motor Controller confine his functions to those of Director of the Assam Transport only with a suitable office drawn from the present establishment.

*Srijut SURENDRANATH BURAGOHAJIN: This Assembly is of opinion that the Ahom Community of this Province be included among the recognised minorities for the future Indian Constitution and that the Government of Assam do move the Government of India and His Majesty's Government for consideration and acceptance of the Community as such a minority.

I have submitted an Explanatory Memorandum* along with the notice of my Motion so that hon. Members may come prepared to find what is the present position of the Assam Provincial Motor Transport Controller and the large fleet of the Assam Transport Organisation which is under his control. It has been stated, Sir, that the original idea, when I moved in the Budget Session of last year for getting the support of this House for starting this Assam Transport Organisation, was that we should have a fleet of 200 derelicts that were released by the Military Department and which would be made fit for operation in a workshop, I should say, in the workshop in the Dooria Tea Garden, the land for which purpose was very kindly lent by our Friend, Mr. Blennerhassett. Since then the Government of India was good enough to come to our aid and they wanted to give us a fleet, if required, of 1,000 Lease and Lend vehicles of which 300 was to be ear-marked for the use of the Tea Industries. After working out the details of the requirement of the Province, both at the present moment and also looking into the future, I find that such a big fleet will be beyond the means of the Assam Province and may not be required for useful operation after the war. I wanted only to buy, on behalf of the Assam Government 500 such vehicles, 300 was to go to the Indian Tea Industries, if they wanted them. Pursuant to that

*EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

At the Budget Session 1943, the Assembly approved the Establishment of a Motor Transport Organisation which would implement the controls imposed by the Government of India in the War Transport Department and also operate a provincial fleet of goods lorries to meet the serious breakdown in the road transport situation which was then envisaged. It was intended that a number of lorries returned from the Indo-Burma road at a knockdown price should be reconditioned and a fleet of 200 vehicles built up with the addition of some 50 which it was hoped to secure from Lease/Lend sources. But now the fleet has increased to 460 new vehicles and more are expected to be received, if Assam Government can utilize a larger number. The first large duty which fell upon the fleet apart from work for vital Defence projects was the improvement of roads, particularly the Assam Trunk Road, the efficiency of which had been endangered by the heavy military traffic recently thrown upon them, and at times nearly nine-tenth of the tonnage carried has been devoted to such purposes which were important for the operation of Assam Transport and the public as well as for Defence needs. The process, which entails placing a supplementary demand before the Assembly, has been very profitable. Though a large part of the fleet has only been in operation for a few months, earnings are already little short of the actual expenditure, exclusive of the capital sunk in vehicles, tyres and tubes, buildings and camps. It has now however become necessary to turn over a larger proportion of the fleet to the carriage of civil supplies.

Other changes have been taking place. With the progressive difficulty experienced by passengers in securing accommodation on the Railway it is essential to provide for a substitute in the expansion of road services. These must necessarily be tied to definite routes and are unsuitable for operation by Assam Transport. Assam Transport has been compelled to extend its operations to the Surma Valley and in consequence some tendency for doubt to develop in the public mind whether Assam Transport does not and will not compete with private enterprise has manifested itself; this has its root in the problem of petrol distribution from the provincial quota. New vehicles are becoming available for the use of private operations subject to a control that the Director of Assam Transport cannot, and in the opinion of many authorities properly should not, exercise. In these circumstances it will be necessary to revive in their full force the activities of regional Transport Authorities co-ordinated by the Provincial Motor Transport Controller. It will also be necessary for the latter to implement the Tyre, Spare Parts and later possibly also the Petrol Rationing Controls, and he is also charged with the function of expanding use of Producer Gas, a most necessary standby in view of the precarious character of our petrol supply, as no reliance can be placed on even the present reduced quota being allowed indefinitely, while as already mentioned the demand is continually increasing. All these functions require a separate office.

It has been decided by Government that Mr. Ali Ahmed, Chief Engineer, who will be retiring in the ordinary course in July 1944 and will then be available for full-time employment, should undertake these tasks. The work is closely connected with the plans for post-war road development which he has already undertaken as Chief Engineer. He will take over the portion of the staff in the combined Transport Office (about 14 clerks) which is already employed on Motor Transport Control. It is difficult to calculate at the present juncture what will be the cost of the separation, particularly because it will alter from time to time, e.g., when Mr. Ali Ahmed becomes full-time Controller, and if and when he takes over Petrol Rationing. The Central Government will have to be consulted as to the share which they will bear, but this Government hope that at least one half of the cost will fall on Central Revenues. The cost attributable to separation is to all intents for the present only the cost of employing the separate Controller, which may be set at Rs.27,000 per annum, as even if there were no separation it would have soon become necessary to appoint a Deputy Controller to assist the present Controller.

policy we have up-to-date received 488 of these vehicles which are now being employed, 109 on Military work, 191 on quasi-Military work, 64 on Public Works Department and forest work, 112 on civil supplies and 12 are being used by the Assam Transport Organisation itself. We have found, Sir, that though originally we started this Organisation in order to relieve the tension in transport of civil supply, we had first to lend a big proportion of our vehicles to the Military authorities to repair the Assam Trunk Road which was made almost impassable by constant use by heavy lorries of the Military Department. It was partly a remunerative work and partly a work of self-interest. Those hon. Members of this House who traversed over the Assam Trunk Road during recent months must have found to their grief that the springs of their cars were broken—I myself suffered in that respect only very recently, and the use of the Assam Motor Transport lorries carrying heavy burden on such a road would jeopardise the life of such vehicles and now that the Military Department wanted our aid to bring metal to the spot for a thorough repair of the road we thought, Sir, that it was in the best interest of the fleet of the Assam Transport Organisation to lend all their resources for metalising the road. I travelled over the road only in February last, *i.e.*, last month, and I can testify that about one-third of the road had already been brought to a very high condition of improvement, as good as either the Shillong-Sylhet or the Shillong-Gauhati Road and another one-third is being made into a perfect road. The Military believe that they will be able to improve the entire road beyond all recognition in another two months. They know full well that once the monsoon sets in, they will not be able to continue the work on the road. Therefore they are in great haste to complete the repair. But we hope, Sir, that a major part of the fleet will be available for us for transport of civilian goods and passengers, or in other words, to cater for civilian needs. We have already been in constant touch with the War Transport Department to allow us to divert a part of this fleet for civil utilisation. The other day I mentioned, Sir, that, as most of these lorries are on the Lease and Lend Scheme, we must show authorities that the carriage of goods and passengers by the fleet of the Assam Transport is furthering that cause. An organisation of such a big number of fleet, say of 500, requires very constant and careful watching. For to keep the fleet going, one must have sufficient number of spare-parts, sufficient petrol and to keep a very strict watch on the fleet which is being utilised for the purpose for which it is intended. The work of the Provincial Motor Transport Controller for doing motor transport business and his duty to look after and keeping the fleet in perfect running order, has been found to be too much for one officer.

It has therefore been decided that the two posts should be separated and the functions administered by two different persons. Mr. Adamson, who has been functioning so far to the best of his ability, was selected by the Government of India and a part of his salary is being borne by them. They also originally told the Assam Government that they were willing to part with these Lease and Lend vehicles provided they worked under Mr. Adamson's supervision. Therefore we propose that he should remain in charge of the operation of this fleet with his designation as the Director of Assam Transport. For the post of Provincial Motor Transport Controller, the Government of India suggested the employment of a retired Chief Engineer—a European gentleman from the Punjab. As our Chief Engineer, Mr. Ali Ahmed, who has served, Sir, 30 years in Assam almost continuously except for a break of about 2½ years while he was deputed in the construction work of the capital of India, and as he is about to retire in the month of July next, the Assam Government thought it better to have a man of their own who knows the country, who is perfectly aware of the conditions of our roads and who is at present engaged in the Post-war Road Development Scheme, as the Provincial Motor Controller rather than an outsider who has never been to Assam. We propose, Sir, to give the entire branch of civilian needs to the charge of Mr. Ali Ahmed. It will be his duty to develop civilian transport with these Lease and Lend vehicles, if the Government of India agree, in definite routes and working to a schedule, as a continuous service may be had

from Bengal borders right to the Eastern boundaries of Assam. We believe that he can combine his duties along with the duties of the Controller of spare parts of motor vehicles, Controller of tyre rationing and he most probably, will be given charge of the rationing of petrol as well. Thus we will have in the present Motor Transport Controller a quite big bunch of duties so that he gives his full attention to the operational activities of this big fleet. I will come before the House with a Supplementary Demand for meeting the charges of this Assam Transport Organisation. I won't anticipate matters, but I can say very roughly that if properly supervised, the Assam Motor Organisation will more than pay its expenditure—both capital and running. Speaking from memory, Sir, if we have sunk a capital of 45 lacs in this, so far the realisation has been very nearly 20 lacs up till now with bills of about 18 lacs outstanding. Even if the working expenses are deducted there will be a safe margin as a respectable dividend on the capital invested.

I hope, Sir, I have laid sufficient materials before the House to see the advantage of separating these two functions from one man and giving them in charge of two different officers and I will have the support of this House in separating these two posts under two different officers—one Indian and one European. If any more information is required by any hon. Member in order to enable him to give his considered vote, I will be too happy to supply. But, I think, from the statement I have made just now and the explanatory statement that I have subjoined with the notice of this Motion, hon. Members will have got materials to base their judgment on.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Motion moved:—

“That this House recommends that the dual functions now performed by the Provincial Motor Transport Controller, of doing motor control work and also managing the fleet of lorries of the Assam Transport Organisation be separated and that the Provincial Motor Transport Controller be given a separate and necessary establishment, while the present Motor Controller confine his functions to those of Director of the Assam Transport only with a suitable office drawn from the present establishment.”

Mr. R. A. PALMER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the Motion before the House as we agree that with the great expansion of Assam Transport, the officer in charge of this organisation should be relieved from the duties of Provincial Motor Transport Controller.

In passing, I wish to congratulate the Government on their foresight in creating “Assam Transport” which has helped Assam in a very critical period and which undoubtedly will be called on to meet increasing demands in the future. I should like to pay tribute to those responsible for building up this huge Organisation from scratch in face of what must have been almost overwhelming difficulties. I must, however, issue a warning against complacency.

The very size of this organisation involving a huge sum of money requires most careful safeguarding if disaster is to be avoided. Government have decided to improve the position at the top, but that is not all that is needed. It is essential that the organisation should be efficient from top to bottom. Are Government satisfied that they have sufficient technical staff to carry out all the duties involved? Have they adequate supervisory staff in the districts? We hear ugly rumours about lack of integrity among the low class personnel right down to drivers and handymen. If graft is allowed to go on unchecked, efficient service is impossible.

On the question of drivers, it is noticeable that Assam Transport drivers are among the most courteous on the roads today, and if these drivers can be taught the elementary rules of courtesy it is a pity that they cannot be caused to absorb the elementary rules of probity. Above all, are Government satisfied that they have sufficient repair shops, tools and spare parts for the proper maintenance of this huge fleet? In my opinion, this is not the case. Already a consi-

derable amount of work has been lost owing to vehicles being off the road awaiting repair, and to continue to run a fleet of this size without proper maintenance, will mean rapid disappearance of their capital assets. I feel sure that the Hon'ble Premier fully realises these difficulties and dangers ahead, but it is only right that these dangers should be made clear to this House.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, from what we have just now heard from the Hon'ble Premier, and from the Explanatory Memorandum attached to the Motion, it seems, Sir, that the functions of the newly-created post of the Provincial Motor Controller will be confined to those formerly performed by the Provincial Rationing Authority. That is to say, his function will be to control and supervise rationing of petrol and motor parts. The whole fleet that has been created under the Assam Transport will remain under Mr. Adamson. By this proposal it is only proposed that Mr. Ali Ahmed will take upon himself the duties of the former Provincial Controller before the creation of the Assam Transport and take charge of routine duties. He will do the work of rationing of petrol, tyres, tubes, etc. That is what I understand from the Explanatory Memorandum. Three reasons have been assigned for this step. Firstly, that the work of the Assam Transport has increased considerably. At first the estimate was for a fleet of 200 lorries, but at present the number has risen to 488, and is likely to increase more. Secondly, Sir, it is said, "New vehicles are becoming available for the use of private operations subject to a control that the Director of Assam Transport cannot, and in the opinion of many authorities properly should not, exercise". Then, again, "Other changes have been taking place. With the progressive difficulty experienced by passengers in securing accommodation on the Railway it is essential to provide for a substitute in the expansion of road services. These must necessarily be tied to definite routes and are unsuitable for operation by Assam Transport. Assam Transport has been compelled to extend its operations to the Surma Valley and in consequence some tendency for doubt to develop in the public mind whether Assam Transport does not and will not compete with private enterprise has manifested itself." This is the second reason. With regard to the first reason, Sir, I do not deny that the fleet has increased considerably, and is likely to increase more. But, Sir, I think originally a person of lesser salary was contemplated for the head of the Assam Transport. We have now in the person of Mr. Adamson a man of competence who draws a higher salary than was originally contemplated.

With regard to the second point, *i.e.*, about suspicion that the Assam Transport will compete with private enterprise, I do not think this will be the case. I do not think that the Assam Motor Transport will take up the work of passenger traffic, and as such there is no reason for the public to suspect that the Assam Transport will compete with private enterprise in this field.

Thirdly, Sir, the newly-created Department, if I have understood the position correctly, will be only concerned with rationing of petrol, tyres, tubes and other spare motor parts. Only for these functions the proposed separation cannot be justified. At any rate the separation will be too costly because it is contemplated that if Mr. Ali Ahmed is put in charge of this separated Department a sum of Rs.27,000 per annum will have to be paid to him as Controller of Motor Transport. Sir, the rationing functions are divided among various Regional Authorities, and those Authorities are almost supreme in their own jurisdictions. I do not know, Sir, whether the Provincial Authority has any original jurisdiction excepting hearing cases coming on appeals and revisions from the Area Rationing Authorities. If there is any, I do not think that jurisdiction is in any way bigger than that of the different Area Rationing Authorities. Those Area Rationing Authorities are managed by the Superintendents of Police efficiently and I think very few cases come on appeal or revision from their decisions to the Provincial Rationing Authority. It has also been stated in the Memorandum that "In these circumstances it will be necessary to revive in their full force the activities of Regional Transport Authorities co-ordinated by the Provincial Motor Transport Controller". So, even if the idea is to revive

that Regional Transport Authority, I do not think the work justifies so much expenditure, or the need for such a highly paid officer to be at its head. I think the work of the newly-created Department will be very small in comparison to the expenditure that is proposed to be incurred on that account. So, Sir, I think the reasons adduced for the proposed separation are hardly convincing. Mr. Adamson is a competent officer. Though he has a lot to do in controlling a fleet of about 500 lorries, it should be remembered that the rationing work is not much. I hope it would not be difficult for an officer like him to manage both these works efficiently. Nevertheless if this function has got to be separated, part-time officers can be put in charge of this work as in the case of other Rationing Authorities.

For these reasons, Sir, I do not think the separation is justified, at any rate, if the separation entails so much cost.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I confess that with my limited knowledge of English I could not follow the reasoning in the Explanatory Memorandum fully until I heard the reasons for separation from the Hon'ble Premier. Those reasons are not quite clear to me. It appears that a quadruplication of authorities has been made in respect of Motor Transport. Formerly there were Regional Transport Authorities—under the Provincial Transport Authority, all governed by the Motor Vehicles Act. Now come the Controller of Motor Transport and the Director of Motor Transport.

I do not know what would be the exact functions of all these authorities and I am afraid they may lend themselves to frequent friction and overlapping of authorities. From the Explanatory Memorandum also I find that the Regional Transport Authority has already gone out of existence so that there is necessity of reviving it in full force. That was a news to us. We do not know that the Provincial Motor Transport Authority has ceased to function. It is for the first time that we hear from the Explanatory note that it has got to be revived from its ashes.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: It is in a moribund condition.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: If it is revived, it pre-supposes that it was dead. So this point has got to be cleared by the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

What would be the function of the Controller and what would be the function of the Director we do not know. It is said Mr. Adamson will be in charge of managing the fleet. If the Controller directs certain vehicles to be put on certain roads and the Director refuses to supply him those vehicles what would be the position? So unless there is co-ordination there is chance of friction. In my opinion the best thing will be to put a Deputy Controller. I have no special fancy for either Mr. Adamson or for anybody else. What I want is that there should be one authority to guide the whole movement of motor transport as well as the management of the fleet of vehicles. If that is not done, I am afraid, Sir, the operation is likely to founder on rivalry, friction and lack of adjustment.

We do not know what salary is to be given to the new Controller. The financial commitment for this separation must also be made clear to this House. With these words, Sir, although I do not oppose the Motion, I would like to get certain clarification from the Hon'ble Premier.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, when I find myself differing rather strongly from two minds as astute as Mr. Sen and Mr. Aditya, I need to marshal my arguments carefully. I think it is possible to do that and to bring this discussion down to concrete examples.

It seems to me essential that these two functions shall be split. I cannot see the justice of the biggest single operator of motor transport also being in administrative control of every motor vehicle belonging to industries and to private owners. There is likely to remain an acute shortage of petrol for the next three years; there is equally likely to be a shortage, perhaps a greater shortage, of tyres for several years to come. Now Assam Transport, Sir, with its fleet of 500 vehicles is the biggest single consumer of petrol and of tyres. The remaining lorries and cars in the Province are also consumers of tyres and also of petrol. How is it possible, Sir, for any man, even a super-man, to adjudicate between Mr. Aditya, owner of a lorry, I who own a lorry and the Assam Transport who own 500 lorries. That can never be a small matter.....

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: On a point of information, Sir. Is it not a fact, Sir, that the general principle is enunciated for distribution of petrol and tyres by the Government? The principle is first of all enunciated by the Government.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: The only principle in war time must be: Which user can make the most economical use of the short supply? Therefore, if I own a lorry, Mr. Sen owns a lorry, Mr. Aditya owns a lorry and we have to argue our case for petrol and tyres to the Manager, Assam Transport, the Assam Transport can reasonably say that they are the most economical users of tyres and petrol and if there is shortage, other owners than Assam Transport must bear the shortage.

It seems to me, Sir, what we want is an adjudicator, a person before whom the Director of Assam Transport has to state his case and before whom I have to state my case and Mr. Sen and Mr. Aditya have to state their case

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: On a point of information, Sir. I am sorry to interrupt again. Is it not a fact that the Government is the ultimate revising authority over the Provincial Motor Transport Controller?

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: That may be true technically, but in so far as the supply of tyres, supply of petrol and supply of lorries are controlled not by the Government of Assam but by the Central Government we have to have some means of protecting each consumer of essential vehicles, tyres and petrol.

A third point which I would like Mr. Aditya and Mr. Sen to consider is the absolute certainty that before 1944 expires quite a large number of motor transport vehicles will have to switch over to producer gas. There will be little petrol and therefore there will be a large number of vehicles which will have to go over to producer gas which is a very difficult operation. Now, Sir, who is going to determine which lorry is to switch over to producer gas. Is it the Director of Assam Transport who is to go over or is it I? I suggest, Sir, in the interest of the Director of Assam Transport the two functions — one a judicial function and the other an operational function should not be, and cannot be, combined in one and the same person; it is impossible for that one person who is the biggest single operator to display degree of impartiality which would win the confidence of Mr. Sen, Mr. Aditya and myself.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: On a point of information, Sir. Will this new officer have authority to ration the needs of the Assam Transport, that is to say, if the Director of Assam Transport wants 100 vehicles will this officer be able to say 'no, you must be satisfied with 50'?

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: I think this officer must have that authority and that is why the Hon'ble Prime Minister has set up this officer to determine these things as fairly as possible. What I am quite certain is that we are running into major shortages and these shortages will have to be fairly shared. And therefore in so far as the appointment of the Provincial Motor Transport Controller, quite separate from the Assam Transport, apart from the executive, will ensure that the shortage is evenly shared, I support the proposal.

I have one final point, Sir, of which I had a practical illustration this morning. The tea industry has to collect 200 thousand tons of wood-fuel in replacing coal which it cannot get now, and the only way of getting the wood-fuel to the factories is by motor transport. Now, there are two agencies which can carry this wood-fuel. The Assam Motor Transport can carry this wood-fuel or the tea industry can carry this wood-fuel. The Assam Transport has petrol, tyre and lorries, but the tea industry has the lorries but it has not the petrol. Now, Sir, before whom is the tea industry going to state its case for the carriage of wood-fuel. I do not mind, Sir, who carries the tea industry's wood-fuel, whether by their own lorries or by the lorries of the Assam Transport, so long as it is carried. The only test that must be applied is, which is the most economical means of carrying a given amount of tonnage. Is it the Assam Transport? If so, let it carry it. Is it the tea industry? Let it carry it. But, Sir, the determination of these difficult points is a matter for somebody who is quite unconnected with the operation. It is the old problem of separation of judiciary and executive. It is a very practical application of the principle which I understood that my Friends Mr. Aditya and Mr. Sen have always fought for.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: This is a new way of dealing with the question.

Mr. C. W. MORLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is pertinent to enquire in this matter of a diversion of responsibilities as to whether the new post to be taken up by Mr. Ali Ahmed will not occupy the whole of his time?

It is inferred in the Motion moved by the Hon'ble Prime Minister that this work is closely connected with the plans for post-war road developments which he—Mr. Ali Ahmed—has already undertaken, and presumably from the terms of this Motion he will continue to hold this post in addition to his new duties.

In my opinion, Sir, this latter work is a full-time job alone and to add to it the multifarious duties connected with the rationing of tyres, spare parts and later possibly also petrol rationing control seems to be asking too much of any one individual to carry out successfully. We should welcome an assurance from Government, that Mr. Ali Ahmed when he retires from the Public Works Department will be released from these duties regarding post-war road development, and will devote his whole time to his new post.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I like my hon. Friend, Mr. Aditya take my stand to say something on this Motion, not so much for condemning the Motion but to elicit facts, which may enable me to make up my mind either way. The name of Mr. Ali Ahmed has been introduced in this Motion. It would have been perhaps better for the Government had they not disclosed the personnel just now. Mr. Ali Ahmed is an esteemed and valued Officer of the Government. I know him personally through his public activities and I appreciate his activities so far as the spreading of education in Shillong is concerned. It is natural for anybody who knows him to try to keep him in this Province and if I were in the position of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to-day, I would have probably taken the same course, but that is no reason why we should adopt this Motion. If for other reasons we do not consider it advisable or necessary to do so, Sir, it is very difficult to follow the reasons which have been stated by different Members who have previously spoken in support of this separation. First, Sir, at the present moment the function of rationing petrol and tyre is being performed by the Superintendents of Police in different districts. Even after separation of this office, I am sure, these officers in the districts will have to carry on this duty. If anybody feels aggrieved by an order refusing the quantity of petrol one requires, or if anybody feels aggrieved by an order refusing the tyres one applies for, he has the right to appeal now to the Deputy Inspector-General of Police. So far as we see there has been no difficulty in carrying out these duties either by the Deputy Inspector General of Police or by the Police Superintendents in different districts. So, for the mere purpose of rationing petrol or rationing tyres, it is not necessary to separate this establishment. Furthermore, Sir, the buses which were granted permits before, and which used to carry passengers can largely relieve the congestion of the railways. The running of buses was stopped in the beginning of the year 1942, for petrol was being rationed. I know, Sir, that personally, because I was at the time and even now one of the bus owners. I had some connection with mail-service, as well. These were stopped at the beginning of 1942 on account of shortage of petrol. Some vehicles were requisitioned and others were stopped for want of petrol. Those buses which were requisitioned have been reconditioned but they are not yet returned to private owners, nor have they got any new replacement. They have not got any supply of vehicles from the Provincial Motor Transport Controller. If Government wants that these buses should relieve the congestion in the railways or help in carrying passengers, then the only thing the Government can do is to let the Regional Transport Authority resume their activities. They can grant permits and help them in getting vehicles. That is all that is needed. They can grant permits and coupons. If for the purpose of carrying passengers, petrol and tyres cannot be allotted to private owners, they cannot also be allotted to the Assam Transport for carrying passengers. If

there is a surplus of petrol after meeting the requirements of the essential services and after meeting the requirements of the Assam Transport, that surplus can be distributed to the private owners of buses. If there is no such surplus, the buses cannot then carry goods and passengers. The main thing is there. So, will the separation of this office or the officers mean more petrol and more tyres which he can distribute among the private owners? This is, Sir, illogical. The demand made by the Government is quite impossible. Unless we have petrol and tyres and parts to distribute amongst the vehicles, whether they belong to private individual or to Assam Transport for the purpose of carrying passengers or goods, it is useless to separate the office. If there are petrol and tyres enough to give, then give permits to private owners.

Khan Bahadur Maulavi KERAMAT ALI : On a point of information, Sir, who will grant the permits ?

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : It is the Regional Transport Authority and the Provincial Transport Authority. But they are not the authority to grant or ration petrol. No doubt the Regional Transport Authorities grant permits but these permits may be cancelled afterwards because the private owners may not be able to put vehicles on the road on account of shortage of petrol and on account of the fact that vehicles were requisitioned. So, Sir, I cannot understand what functions will be actually carried by these officers when separated. The Deputy Inspector-General of Police, who is the final authority in the matter of distribution of petrol and tyres, I am sure, does not complain that he cannot carry on his function, nor I think, it is intended by the Government to replace a Superintendent of Police or substitute some other person in his place for carrying on the function of distribution of petrol and tyres. So, I do not find any necessity whatsoever for the separation of this office. It is claimed that unless this office is separated, this officer will be responsible for the supply of the needs of the civil population, but the whole question is whether there are means by which needs of the civil population can be supplied.

My hon. Friend Mr. Whittaker said that this officer will be in a position to adjust between the claims of the Assam Transport and the claims of private buses only, and he will ration both. But I am very sorry to say that it will be far from the actual fact. No one, not to speak of this officer, even the Government of Assam, will be able to deny to give to the Director of Assam Transport, his demand for carrying on war transport and for making roads for war purposes. Rather the first thing that you will have to earmark for him is that so much vehicles must be given, so many tyres must be given, so much petrol must be given to the Director of Assam Transport and so on and so forth. That will be the first thing to be done. If any body says no, I will never believe it. Because Assam Transport will implement war efforts, they will carry stones for the purpose of making roads, they will carry rations, foodstuffs and other materials, so their necessity will be met first and after that there will be distribution between A, B and C, whether Mr. Sen gets or Mr. Aditya gets that will be decided afterwards, of course, Mr. Whittaker will have his share, before that. I do not therefore, find any necessity for creation of a separate post for this purpose. What I suspect is this that the Director of Assam Transport, Mr. Adamson, is an uncontrollable person, uncontrollable by the Government of Assam, because he holds a very big position. Some portion of his pay is given by the Government of India, so whenever any occasion arises he just goes under the shelter of the Government of India and defies the Provincial Government. That is the position. So long as Mr. Adamson holds the sole authority, the Government of Assam may find it difficult to meet the requirements of the civil population. It will be perhaps admitted that so long Mr. Adamson, who is partly paid by the Government of India, is in charge of the whole show, the Government of Assam cannot surely exercise their full control over him and for that reason cannot meet the requirements of the civil population, which the Government of Assam surely likes to be met—and that perhaps is the reason why this Department is sought to be separated. I understand he has not submitted any

accounts to the Comptroller, and his accounts are not open to scrutiny by the Comptroller of the Province and he is above everybody in this Province. Furthermore, Sir, there was some discussion about the position of Mrs. Adamson, and in spite of all these, she is still there, although the Hon'ble Premier gave us the assurance that he would see that she was kept out of office.

Subject to what I shall hear from the Hon'ble the Premier's reply—I hope he will no doubt give a dispassionate reply—I am opposing this Motion.

Srijut SURENDRANATH BURAGOHAJ: Mr. Speaker, Sir. There is one purpose for the separation of this post which attracts me. In spite of what has been expressed by my hon. Friends, Mr. Sen and Mr. Aditya, I find that the Motion seeks to provide for a substitute in the expansion of road services to meet the situation created by difficulties experienced by passengers in securing accommodation in the railways. The other day, the House will remember, my hon. Friends Mr. Whittaker and Mr. Mookerjee were very critical of appalling and frightful condition that exists in rail journey. So, Sir, one of the duties, I find from the Explanatory Memorandum, of the Motor Transport Controller will be to maintain a fleet of passenger lorries. If that is the case, if I am correct in coming to that conclusion, certainly that will be going a great way on the part of Government to meet the needs of the common people.

Certainly, the primary work of the proposed Provincial Motor Transport Controller will be to do motor control work generally and to implement the controls imposed by the Government of India in the War Transport Department. So, that being the position, Sir, and that being the permanent function of the Motor Transport Controller what I have to suggest is that instead of this Government bearing half the cost of this officer, we should insist that the entire cost should be borne by the Central Government.

And with these observations, Sir, I have no hesitation in supporting the Motion moved by the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: May I know one thing, Sir, what is the pay of the present Deputy Controller of Motor Transport?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: He draws his grade pay *plus* Rs.200.

Sir, I am under two cross fires. One view is that by splitting up of the functions of the office of the present Motor Transport Controller into one of Motor Transport Controller, the other that of the Manager or Director of Assam Transport—which is not necessary—the Provincial Motor Transport Controller will have practically nothing to do; whereas my Friend Mr. Morley thinks that we should not allow the proposed Provincial Motor Transport Controller to continue planning post-war road development scheme at all because it will be too much for one officer to function both as a road planner of the future and also to discharge his duties efficiently as a Provincial Motor Transport Controller. I can give Mr. Morley this assurance that as soon as the work of the road planning will be finished and forwarded to Government of India or as soon as our post-war reconstruction committee considers the scheme Mr. Ali Ahmed will be released from that part of the work.

Sir, my Friend Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri has got the wrong end of the stick to beat me with. He thinks that by this proposed separation of functions we are proposing to give Mr. Adamson a *carte blanche* in everything, that, he will be above the control of the Local Government but if this separation comes in as I have proposed before the House, he will be under the full control of the Provincial Government and therefore of the Legislative Assembly. Government of India who had selected him for appointment as Provincial Motor Transport Controller agreed to bear half his salary. We have already adopted the suggestion made by my friend Mr. Buragohain of approaching the Government of India that as we are diverting the functions of these two offices and as we are going to appoint two officers—each as the Head of his Department—the Government of India should bear the entire cost of the Provincial Motor Transport Controller. The salary that is borne by the Government of India is not for Mr. Adamson but for the post of the Motor Transport Controller. Instead of giving

Mr. Adamson *carte blanche*, he will be entirely guided by the Government of Assam. My Friend suggests that he is above all accounts or account rules and above audit control but that is not so. Comptroller does check his accounts. We are also trying our level best to get a chartered accountant to be attached to this Organisation so that everything works under the audit rules and control from the financial point of view.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : My information is that Comptroller has not been able to audit his accounts.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I am giving every relevant fact for the information of the House. It is not for my Friend Mr. Chaudhuri to interrupt me. We approached the Government of India to search even the Military personnel and Audit Department so that they can give us a chartered accountant or a man who is competent to deal with commercial accounts. Unfortunately though searching high and low, they could not secure such a man. As a last resort, we approached Government of India to release Mr. Glass who was formerly the Comptroller of Assam and who is now employed under the Military, to come and become the Comptroller of the finances of the Motor Transport Organisation. We offered him Rs.1,000 which pay he is now getting in the Military, but over and above this, he is getting certain concession. So, he wanted a salary of Rs. 1,200. We wired to him offering Rs.1,200 and to come immediately. We also requested the Government of India to waive three months' notice in this case. Therefore, it shows that Government of Assam is keen to keep the accounts of this Organisation absolutely under control and duly audited and they have spared no pains in trying to secure a man who knows how to check these accounts. Mr. Glass has got that advantage because before he came to Assam, he was serving in Burma and there he was in charge of the commercial accounts. Sir, I will take up the objections raised by my friends opposite. I refer to Mr. Sen and Mr. Aditya. A friend of mine, some 30 years ago, in another House of Legislature had stated : "If human memory is short, official memory is shorter still". My Friend criticised that in the Explanatory Memorandum, I have described the Regional Authorities as "moribund". The term is of their use, not mine. They themselves know the reason why the Regional Authorities have not had the same amount of work to do during the last two years. The explanation has curiously come from Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri. With the rationing of petrol and the requisition of motor buses and lorries for the Indo-Burma road about May, 1942 when almost all the transport services that were plying for carriage of goods or passengers in the different parts of the Province, the Province was practically denuded of this class of vehicles. About 600 of such buses and lorries were requisitioned by the Military Departments ; some of them met with untimely end on that road, and when we started this Organisation and asked the Military to release the rest, about 300 vehicles, which was described by experts as having been "cannibalised" that is, even the vitals were ruined by the rough treatment they received in the hands of the Military, came to our hands.

We wanted to recondition them as best as we could, and put them on the road. If anybody had seen the junk now at the *bamboobari* of Mr. Blennerhassett's tea garden, he would have marvelled how those lorries could be brought from Imphal or Dimapur, because it was near about Dimapur wherefrom the derelicts were dragged. By dismantling 4 or 5 lorries, and assembling different parts of them, only one or two could be reconditioned and made fit for the road. This was the uphill task with which the Motor Transport Organization first started. When we approached the Government of India whether they could not come to our aid, they originally agreed to help us with about a hundred new lorries. But now they are most magnanimous by offering 1,000 Lease and Lend lorries, if they could be suitably used. As I have said, 500 is the utmost that we could invest in and profitably use both now and post-war. To keep such a big fleet in motion one must have an up-to-date plant, *i.e.*, workshop, as Mr. Palmer has alluded to, and I quite agree with him. We have already selected a site at Rangamati probably in the district of Nowgong and which is half way between the two ends of the South Assam Trunk Road. We have approached Government of India to try and secure for us the machinery, and materials by requisitioning

throughout India for the help of our Motor Transport Organisation. But the main difficulty comes in about which, without going into details, I gave an inkling before the House in my Explanatory Memorandum. The difficulty that has been encountered are that the Assam Motor Transport Organisation in its efforts to help war activities have impinged their services in certain areas where the ordinary licensed bus owners are plying, and about which I have received complaints. A case in point which has been referred to in a very cryptic manner in my Explanatory Memorandum, was raised from the complaint of the Sylhet Dawki Bus Owners Association. On account of the requisitioning of most of the vehicles from that part of the road a very depleted service runs between Sylhet and Dawki. In order to keep the Military personnel free from scabies and other skin diseases, the Military buys at Sylhet seven lakhs of oranges daily. These oranges are grown in the Khasi Hills between Pynursla and Dawki. These are to be had in the Dawki market. Any one travelling on that road have seen stacks and stacks of oranges piled at Pynursla and Dawki. The Pynursla stock is carried by the buses that have been permitted to run between Shillong and Sylhet. But the Dawki oranges are normally carried by vehicles plying between Sylhet and Dawki. Generally number of vehicles available to carry these are found insufficient but as the Military wanted the fruits quickly to be taken to Sylhet from where they had to be despatched to their destinations, the Assam Transport put in some of their fleet with the best of intention, *i.e.*, carriage of goods which could not be handled by the services plying between Sylhet and Dawki. But the Bus Association of that locality complained to Government that when they had been permitted by Government to run their lorries on the payment of certain fees, and if somebody else or the Assam Motor Transport was allowed to carry those goods, they were deprived of their legitimate carriage. So, we had to withdraw the lorries of Assam Transport in spite of the protest from the Military authorities, requesting the Sylhet bus owners to run their lorries efficiently or to transport into Sylhet quickly the entire quantity of oranges. It is this kind of encroachment or such manner of competition between the Assam Transport and public carriers service that has come to light was indicated in my Explanatory Memorandum.

Now, with the support of the House, we are endeavouring to divert a large proportion of these Assam Transport vehicles for meeting civilian needs, and want that a part of the fleet should be carrying passengers and a part civil supplies, *i.e.*, food-grains and things of that sort. After all we want that these lorries should be utilised to the best advantage of the Province as a whole. If the rationing or rather allocating of these vehicles are left to the parochial or to the Regional Transport Authorities, they will look to the needs of the limited areas and they could not have a bird's eye view of the Province. We therefore want that the Motor Transport Controller should be given a chance to draw up a scheme how best the lorries which the Assam Government want diverted to carriage of civilian goods and passengers, could be used. We want, if possible, after Government of India allows, that a part of the fleet be given to different bus owners as replacement for their lorries that were taken by the Military. I think my Friend Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri can put us a case, because he used 4 lorries.....

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: I will only be glad to see that those lorries which were snatched away by the requisitioning authorities in 1942 are returned or replaced.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: He may have the replacement of the fleet that he used to run on a particular road. We have provided as many as 33 lorries for replacement of those that were taken away from the roads and later on destroyed or made decrepit by the Military use. What we want is not that the Government should run a passenger service of its own, but Government desires that a regular service should be run from place to place. For example, if we are to cater for the difficulties of railway travellers, we must have a regular and continuous service from the borders of Bengal to the other end of the Province by road and to see how best we can achieve that object and whether it should be given

to an individual or to a syndicate, or if it is given to an individual whether he should be granted to run under a schedule timing, we must have a Department with an experienced officer at its head.

Then again, as Mr. Whittaker pointed out, there is the question whether those lorries should be run on petrol or producer gas. If by producer gas, whether the necessary plants could be made available. All these things shall have to be worked out very thoroughly and would require minute examination by an officer. It is for this purpose, an officer of the type and of the experience of our road system like Mr. Ali Ahmed should be the Provincial Motor Transport Controller. The question of producer gas is looming large. Probably to-morrow, in my Bill for amending the Assam Motor Taxation Act, I will have to speak on the subject. Suffice it to say that the Government of India has given us a serious warning already that the quota of petrol that is being given to Assam may be seriously curtailed and they want that as many vehicles as possible should be put on producer gas installation. Every hon. Member is aware that we have not got sufficient information about these installations. If a big number is allotted—we have asked the Government of India to give us as many as they can—if a big number is allotted to Assam and if all are used by the Assam Transport, nothing will be left for the fleet that may be operating by private persons and if there is a regular cut on petrol rationing, what will happen? Then all the civilian fleet, the replacement by Lease and Lend vehicles of old ones and also those passenger services which may be started on new routes—all these will have to be stopped or curtailed. The Provincial Motor Controller will be in a better position to allot a certain number of these producer gas installations to the private routes or the fleet operating for carriage of civilian goods and passengers.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: On a point of information, Sir. May we know what is the reason for restricting these producer gas installations?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Because the number of such machineries are very limited.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Is there any rationing?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There is no rationing yet, but the Government of India is trying to ration by meeting requirements of each Province. We have asked them to increase our quota and if possible to tell us what is the best brand. There are different kinds of installations in the market, but some have proved a failure in Assam; we have tried some installations in the Assam Transport. It requires very special training of the driver and some of the machineries have already been spoiled by inefficient drivers. Again, sufficient and proper charcoal is necessary. We have asked the Forest Department and they have agreed to produce as much as 35 thousand tons during the winter of 1944. So, we have to see how many producer gas installations will be available for Assam, how many installations to be issued to different buses plying for carrying civilian goods and what number released for vehicles plying for Military of the Assam Transport, and how the charcoal available allocated for passenger services run by private persons. All these will have to be gone through very carefully and therefore, we want a very senior and competent officer. Some of my hon. Friends have said there is no use spending this 27,000 rupees, but I really believe and I am convinced that by the expenditure of this Rs. 27,000, probably, the Assam Government will be getting about ten times of that amount on the better working of the Assam Transport under one head. The Assam Transport, as Mr. Palmer has rightly pointed out, is suffering from lack of supervisory staff. We are trying to expand the staff and we are trying to train them. We have appointed some outsiders and we have told them definitely that they are being kept temporarily. For want of supervision, only yesterday, there has occurred a sad accident on the Shillong-Sylhet road. One of the Assam Transport vehicles was coming up to Shillong after performing necessary duties at Sylhet—the driver brought two passengers illicitly, probably

the driver was drunk—and there was an accident. One of the passengers was killed and the other passenger has been very seriously hurt. I do not say that these accidents will not occur if the functions are separated, but I do say that if the functions are separated there will be one man to give his entire time and thought for the better running of the Assam Transport Organisation. I may mention that every request for requisitioning a motor car goes to the Provincial Motor Transport Controller. In these days new cars are not available and even second hand cars are very scarce. The Provincial Motor Transport Controller has got to rack his brain in order to see if he can rob a particular individual or an officer of his car so that that car may be utilised by one whose need is greater and who can utilise it to the best advantage and interest of the Province. Sometimes, when he requisitions a car, an appeal is laid before me. I can cite an instance. A retired Civil Surgeon in Shillong, a man with very big private practice had his car requisitioned for one of the Civil Defence Department Officers who was without any car. The Provincial Motor Transport Controller had to comb Shillong before he could secure this one. Ultimately he requisitioned this car of the private medical practitioner and the car was taken out to another district of the Province. But the retired Civil Surgeon came to Government and we considered that depriving this gentleman of a car would mean a very great set-back on the humanitarian and curative activities of this medical practitioner and therefore, we asked the Provincial Motor Transport Controller to withdraw his requisition and give back the car. Luckily, the medical practitioner got back his car and the Provincial Motor Transport Controller had to search Sylhet for a car for the officer of the Civil Defence Department. This is by the way, but informs the House of the multifarious duties of the present Provincial Motor Transport Controller.

Then, I come to the question of rationing of spare parts, rationing of tyres and rationing of petrol. That will not be easy. Moreover, out of the expenditure of Rs.27,000, probably, we will get half the salary of the Motor Transport Controller from the Government of India. We have already asked them to bear the entire expenditure. If the House rejects this, I have already explained, that the Director of Assam Transport will have to be given a Deputy and that will cost money. For the extra work that is being done by the Superintendents of Police, such as, rationing of tyre, rationing of petrol, and rationing of spare parts, they had already represented to Government for special pay which was refused. But they are not satisfied. The Association of the Imperial Police Service have lodged a memorandum before this Government. Some individual Superintendents of Police have already memorialised the Secretary of State which has gone only the other day. If the Secretary of State hold that the duty which is not meant for performance by Police force has been thrown upon them and therefore, legitimately they should be given special pay, then we will have to give them extra allowances.

So, Sir, the separation that I have proposed is fraught with greater benefits to the Province than keeping one man at the head of two different functions, when contradictory interests shall have to be adjudicated, as has been explained by Mr. Whittaker, and when we have got an experienced officer to undertake these duties and organise transport of civilian goods and passengers. I therefore think, Sir, that the House should bless my proposal instead of opposing it.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: May I know whether, after the separation, the Police officers will continue their functions as rationing authorities in the districts?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: They may have to perform routine duties, but the main function of settling policy of distribution and allocation will be done by the Motor Transport Controller.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: May I know whether there will be any area rationing authorities?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There will be some, but the main work of principle as well as the method of supply will be done here in Shillong by the Provincial Motor Transport Controller.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: May I know whether we will be asked to pay extra allowances to those police officers for carrying on these duties?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: For routine duties they will not be eligible for any extra pay or allowance.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is: That this House recommends that the dual functions now performed by the Provincial Motor Transport Controller, of doing Motor Control work and also managing the fleet of lorries of the Assam Transport Organisation be separated and that the Provincial Motor Transport Controller be given a separate and necessary establishment, while the present Motor Controller confine his functions to those of Director of the Assam Transport only with a suitable office drawn from the present establishment.

The question was adopted.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 A.M. on Saturday, the 11th March, 1944.

SHILLONG
The 11th April 1944

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A. K. BARUA,
Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.