

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, March 17, 1970 | Phalguna 26,
1971 | Saka

*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven
of the Clock.*

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Threat of Closure of Howrah-Amta and
Howrah-Sheakhala Light Railways**

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*481. SHRI BHAGABAN DAS :
SHRI GANESH GHOSH :
SHRI MOHAMMAD ISMAIL :
SHRI B. K. MODAK :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the threat of closure of the Howrah-Amta and Howrah-Sheakhala Light Railways by the management ;

(b) the total number of employees working in these Railways ;

(c) whether Government will consider to nationalise these Light Railways ; and, if so, when ; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. L.
CHATURVEDI) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) 1486.

(c) and (d). Howrah-Amta and the Howrah-Sheakhala Railway Companies Ltd. have agreements with the District Boards of Howrah and Hooghly respectively, according to the provisions of which the respective District Boards have the option to purchase these Railway lines. Apart from the fact that the Government of India have no con-

tractual obligation or option to purchase these unremunerative Company owned railways, it would not be in the public interest to take them over in that it would involve heavy costs which would render the lines more unremunerative.

श्री भगवान दास : हावड़ा आमतता तथा हावड़ा शियाखाला लाइट रेलवे के बारे में थोड़ा समय पहले प्रेस में यह आया था कि चूँकि इस रेलवे को बड़ी दिक्कत का सामना करना पड़ रहा है पैसेंजर ट्रांसपोर्ट के मामले में, इस वास्ते इसका मैनेजमेंट बन्द करने की बात सोच रहा है। मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूँ कि इन दोनों रेलवेज को सरकार अपने हाथ में लेकर और इनको इम्प्रूव करके चलायेगी ?

श्री रोहन लाल चतुर्वेदी : जैसा कि मैंने कहा है कि इन दोनों रेलों को हवली और और हावड़ा डिस्ट्रिक्ट बोर्डज से कांटेक्ट है। हम लोग देखते जरूर है कि कोई खास तकलीफ न हो। ए सी आर एस भी इसका पीरियडिकल चैकिंग करते रहते हैं। माननीय सदस्य ने जो यह कहा है कि इसके बन्द होने की कोई बात है, उस सम्बन्ध में मेरा निवेदन यह है कि इसकी इतिला मेरे पास नहीं है।

श्री भगवान दास : इसके बन्द हो जाने के बाद इसमें काम करने वाले जो कर्मचारी हैं उनको रेल विभाग अपने अधीन कर लेगा या या नहीं ? उनको आप ले लेंगे या नहीं ?

श्री रोहन लाल चतुर्वेदी : अभी बन्द होने का ही कोई सवाल नहीं है। इस वास्ते एम्प्लाइज को लेने का या न लेने का कोई प्रश्न ही नहीं उठता है।

SHRI GANESH GHOSH : I hope the Minister certainly knows that this Railway is a link between the interior villages and the city of Howrah. It is doing extremely useful work. Daily a few lakhs of people use this Railway and it carries to the city a large amount of freight like vegetables, milk, etc. The Railways are uneconomic as the Minister has said. No doubt, it is facing stiff competition from the road transport. But in view of the extremely useful work that the Railway is doing the question of unremunerativeness should not be considered more because this Government proposes to establish socialism in the country. In view of this, to talk in such terms as this Railway have contract with the District Board or with the Municipality, etc. is absolutely useless because the District Boards or Municipalities are lacking in resources and so, how can they take over these Railways? In view of above facts, is the Government prepared to take over the Railway and run it? I know, it is unremunerative, but in view of the reasons mentioned above by me, is the Government prepared to take over the Railway, make it a full broad-gauge line and run it themselves?

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI : I may humbly say that at present we are not at all thinking of taking over these lines. Our financial position is not good so that we cannot even consider taking over such lines.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : I would like to know from the Minister whether he is aware that a petition was submitted in this House regarding the nationalisation of the Howrah-Amra light railway etc. The Petitions Committee headed by the then Member Shri A. C. Guha recommended to the Government that this should be nationalised. I would like to know whether this recommendation of the Petitions Committee which was unanimous was considered by the Government, and if so, the reason for the rejection of that recommendation.

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI : As I have said earlier, Sir, we did consider the point, but it is not at all possible owing to our acute financial position.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : May I know whether the Petitions Committee did con-

sider the financial aspect and having considered it they recommended that this should be taken over by Government and if some financial aid were given to this railway it could work? I want to know whether those recommendations have been considered?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NANDA) : As far as my information goes, there was some kind of investigation and survey made in 1955, as far back as 1955.....

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : I was not a Member of the House then.....

SHRI NANDA : I am giving a little more history of it. The point is whether we are going to.....

MR. SPEAKER : The question is a specific one.

SHRI NANDA : I am told that that information is not available here about the Petitions Committee's recommendations. But the points arising out of the recommendations of the Petitions Committee can be dealt with by me, if it is so desired.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : Are you satisfied with the answer?

SHRI NANDA : We have not got that information here.

MR. SPEAKER : He has not got the information about the report, but he is prepared to answer the points arising out of it.

SHRI S. KUNDU : The hon. Minister sought your permission. Have you permitted him?

MR. SPEAKER : Only if the hon. Member feels that he can get some information, I can permit him, because there is no reference to the Petitions Committee.....

SHRI S. KUNDU : The hon. Minister said that if you so desire, the points arising out of the Petitions Committee's recommendations will be answered by him. Then, he sat down. If you permit him he may say something.

MR. SPEAKER : The point was about the Petitions Committee's recommendations.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : My specific point was about the nationalisation of the Howrah-Amta Railway. This matter was considered by the Petitions Committee headed by Shri A. C. Guha.

MR. SPEAKER : That information is not with the hon. Minister.

SHRI J. M. BISWAS : In 1968, knowing full well the actual state of affairs, the then Railway Ministry took over the BDR under the SE Railway administration. It also came out in the press that by taking over that railway, Government had to undergo loss. Knowing the fact that it will result in a loss to Government, the then Railway Ministry under the previous management took over that railway. I want to know from the present Railway Ministry what harm is there in taking over this railway line, although it is unremunerative.

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI : As I said in reply to the main question, the difference is between the contracts or agreement between the district board and the company and contracts between us, that is, the railways, and these companies. In the railway line referred to by the hon. Member, were involved in the financial liability, and, therefore, we took it over.

For the information of the House, I may add that we are running a few lines which I shall name below. There is the Katakhal-Lalabozar railway, the Central Provinces Coal Railway ; then there is the Chaparmukh-Silghat railway. Then, there is the Ahmedpur-Katwa line under the Eastern Railway, which is for a distance of 32 miles. Then, there is the Bankura-Damodar railway run by the South Eastern Railway. There, we have financial interest and liability. But we are not running the SS light railway and the Fatwa-Islampur railway.....

SHRI J. M. BISWAS : I wanted some information, but he is giving some other information. I had put a very specific question. Knowing full well that it will result in loss to Government if it took over BDR what prompted Government to take over that railway ? Was it because the manage-

ment of BDR, who was a private party running it, could influence the then Railway Minister Dr. Ram Subhag Singh by some means ? Does the present Ministry want that they should also be influenced by the management of the Howrah-Amta Railway before they could take over this railway ? According to the information given by the SF Railway, the BD railway is just scraps of iron ; there were no bogies and no engines in working condition and yet lakhs of rupees were spent over that railway, whereas the condition of this Amta railway is better. Dr. Ram Subhag Singh, who was the Railway Minister then was influenced .

DR RAM SUBHAG SINGH : This is malicious. It is he who is influenced by others.

SHRI NANDA : The whole assumption is that everything unremunerative in the country should be taken over by us and nationalised ; I do not agree to that assumption. I do not agree that because the line has become unremunerative in the hands of a company which has got a subsisting contract with the district board, I must take it over ; though that matter has not come to us at all, I do not agree to that assumption. Therefore, I do not think that any question arises of any nationalisation.

श्री श्रीमत् प्रकाश त्यागी : क्या गवर्नमेंट को यह जानकारी है कि जितनी प्राइवेट कम्पनीज की रेलवेज हैं, उनमें जनता को बड़ी भारी कठिनाई का सामना करना पड़ता है और लोगों को राष्ट्रीयकृत रेलवेज में जो फॅसिलिटीज मिलती हैं, वे प्राइवेट रेलवेज में नहीं मिलती हैं ? यदि गवर्नमेंट किन्हीं आर्थिक कठिनाइयों के कारण इन प्राइवेट रेलवेज का राष्ट्रीयकरण नहीं करना चाहती है तो क्या गवर्नमेंट ने कोई लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया है कि अमुक समय तक इन सब प्राइवेट रेलवेज का राष्ट्रीयकरण करके जनता को समुचित सुविधायें प्रदान की जायेंगी ; यदि हां, तो सरकार ने इस बारे में जितनी अग्रिम निश्चित की है, जब तक इन प्राइवेट रेलवेज का राष्ट्रीयकरण कर दिया जायेगा ; यदि नहीं, तो इसका क्या कारण है ?

श्री रोहन लाल चतुर्वेदी : केवल आर्थिक कारणों की वजह से हम लोग इस बारे में कुछ नहीं कर सके हैं ।

श्री भोम प्रकाश त्यागी : हो सकता है कि वर्तमान समय में सरकार के सामने आर्थिक कठिनाइयां हों, लेकिन क्या सरकार ने कोई लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया है कि आर्थिक स्थिति ठीक हो जाने पर अमुक समय तक इन रेलवेज का राष्ट्रीयकरण कर दिया जायेगा ; यदि नहीं, तो उसके कारण क्या हैं । मेरे इस प्रश्न का उत्तर दिया जाये ।

SHRI J. M. BISWAS : Sir, I want your protection. I do not think that the reply given can satisfy hon. Members. The hon. Minister has given an evasive reply. My question was a specific question, and he should give a straight answer to it.

श्री भोम प्रकाश त्यागी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, इस समय गवर्नमेंट के सामने आर्थिक कठिनाई है, यह बात तो समझ में आती है । लेकिन मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या गवर्नमेंट यह विचार कर रही है कि अमुक समय तक, जब कि यह आर्थिक कठिनाई न हो, इन रेलवेज का राष्ट्रीयकरण कर दिया जायेगा ; यदि नहीं, तो उसके क्या कारण हैं ?

MR. SPEAKER : He wants to know whether there is any time-limit fixed for nationalisation ?

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI : No, Sir.

श्री भोम प्रकाश त्यागी : क्यों नहीं किया है ?

MR. SPEAKER : They say 'No'. How can the hon. Members force them to come out with any particular answer ?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU : We can force them to evade ?

Century Spinning and Manufacturing
Company Limited

*482. SHRI MADHU LIMAYE : Will

the Minister of INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, INTERNAL TRADE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Century Spinning and Manufacturing Company Limited of the Birlas has sought permission for amending certain clauses of the articles and Memorandum of Association ;

(b) whether the changes seek to give wide powers to the Board of Directors regarding loan guarantees and other modifications ; and

(c) if no permission has been sought, whether the Department of Company Affairs will intervene on its own in the matter and see to it that such amendments are not permitted ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, INTERNAL TRADE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY) : (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) No, Sir. The company is reported to have passed some special resolutions amending certain clauses of its Memorandum and Articles of Association and for effecting any change in the Memorandum of Association the company will have to seek confirmation from the High Court.

(b) Powers of the Board of Directors are laid down in the Act. Any provision in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of a company which is repugnant to the provision of the Act shall be void. The resolutions proposed for the extra-ordinary general meeting of the company held on 4-2-1970 relate to amendments of the Articles of Association to provide for the appointment of managing directors/whole-time director/manager, their remuneration, powers and retirement and also empower the Board of Directors to confer upon the managing director powers of management subject to the superintendence, control and direction of the Board of Directors. Under these amendments no powers are