

of the committee will be in his hands by the end of April. May I know why there is delay in submitting the report?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: As I have said, they are in the process of drafting their report and it is expected that during the course of this month it will be submitted.

Shri Kumaran: My other question has not been answered: whether the development programme will be held up because of the delay in the committee submitting their report.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: The development programme cannot be considered unless we know what are the technical improvements that we will have to apply in the manufacture of new improved equipment.

Shri Maheswar Naik: May I know whether the hon. Minister is satisfied with the performance and efficiency of the telephone equipment manufactured in the Indian Telephone Industries Bangalore?

Mr. Speaker: He is asking for an opinion.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: That is a matter of opinion.

**Konkan Coast Line Service by
B.S.N. Co. Ltd.**

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*398. { Shri Dighe:
Shri Nath Pai:
Shri Kajrolkar:
Shri V. B. Gandhi:

Will the Minister of Transport and Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Bombay Steam Navigation Co. Ltd., has declared that it would close its Konkan coast line service after the monsoons if Government does not permit an increase in the passenger fare and grant its other demands;

(b) what are the demands of the Company;

(c) whether Government have taken any decision in respect of these demands; and

(d) how Government propose to avoid the probable closure of the Steamer Service?

The Minister of Shipping in the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): A statement indicating the position in respect of (a) to (d) is laid on the table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT

(a) to (d). The Company has demanded that—

- (1) the recommendations of the Konkan Coastal Shipping services Committee viz. an immediate increase in passenger fares by 8%, an interest-free loan from the Central Government for purchase of 3 new ships, an annual subsidy of Rs. 1.89 lakhs from the Govt. of Maharashtra and a further increase of 7% in fares when the new ships are put into service should be accepted; and
- (2) till the new ships are commissioned, the Government should reimburse to the Company the extra cost of repairs of the ships over and above the sum of Rs. 9.5 lakhs per annum estimated by the Committee.

However, with the recent merger of Goa with Indian territory and the consequent resumption of the steamer service to Goa, a new factor has been introduced which necessitates a review of the recommendations of the Konkan Coastal Shipping Services Committee for increase in fares and subsidy to the Company, since one of the important reasons given by the Company for its losses was the suspension of the service to Goa in 1955. Meanwhile the company has informed Government that unless its demands are immediately met, the steamer

service would be discontinued w.e.f. 1-6-62. Normally, this service remains suspended during the monsoon period from June to August in any case and is resumed only from September.

The entire position is being examined in consultation with the Govt. of Maharashtra and it is hoped that a decision will be taken soon.

Shri Dighe: May I know whether the popular demand for actual reduction in passenger fares will be taken into consideration?

Shri Raj Bahadur: As a matter of fact, the company which is running this line is insisting on an increase. A committee of enquiry was appointed. We have not been able to take a decision thereon in regard to the proposed increase because we are taking into account the various factors involved. I do not think we can decrease the fares.

Shri Nath Pai: This company is in the habit of holding a threat to close down this line very often. In view of this experience and in view of the fact that nearly 800,000 to 1 million people on the coast of Maharashtra depend on and use this line which is a vital factor in the industrial life of Bombay, may I know what steps Government propose to take including perhaps the invoking of the Essential Services Act to ensure the running of this line?

Shri Raj Bahadur: It is true that there is a big demand. It is also true that the company has got a genuine case so far as the cost of operations is concerned. Its fleet is old. Therefore, we appointed an officer of the rank and status of Shri P. S. Rao who went into the whole question. He has made certain recommendations. We have been trying to take action on them in consultation with the Government of Bombay.

Shri Nath Pai: May I know whether the Government will agree or is contemplating to concede the company's demand to increase the fares

even before the new ships are acquired in view particularly of the fact—this is important; I am completing—that what is euphemistically called ships of the company are nothing but floating cages?

12 hrs.

Shri Raj Bahadur: So far as the recommendations are concerned, the hon. Member might note that an increase of 8 per cent in passenger fares was proposed even before the ships were acquired, and an additional 7 per cent increase after the new ships are acquired. That was the recommendation. But an important factor, namely the liberation of Goa has taken place. One of the reasons why this inquiry committee was appointed was that this company complained that because of the stoppage of the services to Goa, its operations had become a losing proposition. Hence, on account of this new factor having arisen, the matter is being reviewed.

Shri Kajrolkar: In case an agreement is not arrived at between the company and Government, do Government propose to start the shipping operations through their own shipping corporation or permit other companies to operate the service?

Shri Raj Bahadur: We have received an alternative offer from another company about this matter. That will also be taken into account. But let me assure the House that we shall see to it that the services which are necessary are maintained somehow or other, either through private company or, if need be, we may have to ask the Government shipping corporation to look into this matter and to see whether they can shoulder this responsibility, and if so, how far.

Shri Sham Lal Saraf: In view of the approaching monsoon season, are Government prepared to give any assurance that this service will not break down?

Shri Raj Bahadur: The service will always close down during the rainy

season, from June to August. And it starts again from about the 31st August or so. We shall try to see that it is resumed in time.

Shri Nath Pai: Is there any truth in the impression which is gaining ground and currency, and which is being expressed in a large section of the Marathi press that the company has renewed its threat to suspend the lines because when it threatened in December last to suspend the lines, an assurance was held out to them that their demand for increasing the fare would be considered after the elections?

Shri Raj Bahadur: There is no question of elections in this Over and over again, this insinuation has been made. But I would like to repudiate it. The point is, as has been pointed out by the hon. Member who sits behind me, that we have got to take into account the difficulties of the travelling public as well. They want that the fare should be decreased, while the company wants that it should be increased, and, therefore, we are trying to strike a balance somewhere.

Short Notice Question and Answer

Rail-Bus Collision near Dhanbad

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S.N.Q. 3. { **Shri P. R. Chakraverti:**
Shri Raghunath Singh:
Shri P. C. Boroora:

Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) what are the latest reports relating to the number of casualties resulting from the bus-train collision near Dhanbad level crossing;

(b) what arrangements have been made to hold an enquiry into the incident and the steps Government propose to take in this connection;

(c) whether any relief has been granted to the victims of the accident;

(d) if so, in what form and to what extent;

(e) when do Government propose to place before the House findings of the Enquiry Committee;

(f) whether Government had received earlier representations from the people of Dhanbad with regard to the difficulties experienced by them and suggesting the adoption of some improved methods in guarding against such mishaps; and

(g) if so, whether Government have taken any decision with regard to the same?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Railways (Shri Shahnawaz Khan): (a) Out of 46 persons involved in the accident 18 have died, 20 sustained grievous injuries and 8 minor. Three of the 28 injured persons left the hospital on risk bond at their own request and seven persons have been discharged by the hospital. The remaining 18 persons are still undergoing treatment in the hospital.

(b) A Senior Officers' Joint Enquiry has been in progress since 21-4-62. Suitable action will be taken according to the conclusions and recommendations of the Enquiry Committee.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Rs. 2,430 have been paid in cash as *ex-gratia* to the next of kin of two of the dead persons and all seriously injured persons of limited means. Free medical aid is also being given to all the injured persons.

(e) There is no such proposal so far.

(f) No

(g) Does not arise. However the work to construct an over-bridge at the level crossing has already been included in the works programme for 1962-63.