

(b) Attempts are being made to meet the requirement of sleepers during the Second Plan Period for the Indian Railways mostly from indigenous sources. Orders for importing some quantities of sleepers were placed in the past to meet the immediate requirements.

(c) Not yet.

#### Acceptance of Defective Sleepers

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\*753. { Shrimati Maftda Ahmed:  
Shri Mohan Swarup:

Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that steel sleepers worth Rs. 70 lakhs supplied by a Calcutta firm were found defective; and

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government in this regard?

The Deputy Minister of Railways (Shri S. V. Ramaswamy): (a) and (b) An allegation that cast-iron sleepers supplied by one of the Calcutta foundries to the Northern Railway against a supply order costing approximately Rs. 79 lakhs did not strictly conform to specifications, has come to the notice of the Board. The matter is under investigation.

Shri Vidya Charan Shukla: From the statement it appears that the sleepers from East and West Australia have been purchased at higher prices than they were available in Kerala. May I know the reason for purchasing these sleepers at a higher rate from abroad and whether the prices given in the statement are f.o.b. or c.i.f. prices?

Shri S. V. Ramaswamy: In the first place the Australian sleepers are much superior to the Kerala ones. Secondly, we generally deal with State Governments and under the agreement with the State Government of Kerala we have fixed a certain price. The prices quoted by these merchants was in excess of those fixed

prices and if we accepted these prices, we would be disturbing the situation in that particular region. Therefore we have not accepted these prices.

Shri Vidya Charan Shukla: My question has not been answered.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member wants to know if merely because of higher price Australia has to be preferred to Kerala. Evidently that is at the back of his mind. We can pay something more to our own people. After all it gets distributed. Why go to Australia?

Shri S. V. Ramaswamy: It will disturb the equilibrium in this country.

Mr. Speaker: Whose equilibrium?

Shri S. V. Ramaswamy: The equilibrium of prices in this country. Timber is not required merely for the Railways. It is required for civil purposes also. If you raise the price of sleepers for the Railways it will have its reaction upon prices of timber required for other purposes also. It will set up the spiral of prices.

Shri V. P. Nayar: May I know whether the Railway Ministry has conducted any experiment with the imported Australian sleepers to come to the conclusion that they are better than the teak sleepers supplied from Kerala and if so, at which place was this investigation made?

Shri S. V. Ramaswamy: We have referred it to the experts and the experts have told us that the Australian sleepers will have a life time of 20 years whereas the Kerala sleepers will not have more than eight to ten years life.

Shri V. P. Nayar: I would like to know whether this particular proposition has been referred to the Forest Research Institute in Dehra Dun which has been doing work in the matter of finding out the tensile strength of various species of timber?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I require notice for that.

**Shri V. F. Nayar:** In regard to the answer to Q. No. 753, may I know whether it is a fact that the defective cast iron sleepers supplied by the Calcutta firm were accepted after the firm appointed a very close relation of one of the top officers under the Railway Board?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I have submitted already that the matter is under investigation. This is with the Special Police Establishment.

**Shri Kodiyam:** May I know whether Government have made any estimate of the available quantity of indigenous sleepers and how much of this has been made use by the Railway Ministry so far during the Second Plan period?

**Mr. Speaker:** He can give the percentage if he likes.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** We have made every attempt to get this. We are in short supply and we are making every attempt to get this material indigenously. Still, I am afraid we will not be able to get all the material internally.

**Mr. Speaker:** What exactly is the proportion today of indigenous sleepers to imported sleepers?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I would like to work out the percentage.

**Shri Rami Reddy:** May I know whether the Andhra Government has offered to sell sleepers to the Railways and if so, at what price? I want to know whether negotiations are going on and whether there is any likelihood of the Railways purchasing sleepers from the Andhra Government.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** They offered about 45,000 sleepers and nothing more.

**Shri Rami Reddy:** At what price and is the bargain likely to be concluded?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I have no details with me.

**Shri Jinnahandran:** May I know whether any open tenders had been called to purchase these sleepers?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** Global tenders were invited.

**Shri Tyagi:** What is the total cost which has been sanctioned for the purchase of foreign timber for sleepers? May I know if these few thousand sleepers would give a lease of 20 years' life to the whole railway line or to a small part of it?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** Wherever these sleepers are made use of, they will last 20 years and not the whole railway line.

**Shri Tyagi:** I want to know the total cost of foreign exchange involved.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members are asking questions in the form of, "May the hon. Minister answer?" and so on. Why should the question appear in this form?

**Shri Tyagi:** I want to know the total cost because this wasteful expenditure has to be taken notice of by this Parliament.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have no objection to that. All that I am submitting to hon. Members is that let the question not appear as if there is an order to the hon. Minister. Let it be, "May I know etc." That is the proper method.

**Shri Tyagi:** Parliament being the representative of the people, it naturally has to react against wasteful expenditure, particularly when it pertains to foreign exchange; and therefore I submit I want to be told as to how much is the total amount sanctioned for this purpose.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** No total amount has been sanctioned. We are in short supply, and when we have got to meet the demand and if we have to import, it will have to be done.

**Shri Baghmath Singh:** Whether any order has been placed, we want to know that.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Minister must be aware of the feeling in the House. They are anxious to know what is the total quantity of sleepers in terms of the price at which they are purchased, what is the indigenous quantity that is supplied and the amount we are giving away to a foreign country. Hon. Minister must anticipate all these questions.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** We cannot fully anticipate all the questions.

**Mr. Speaker:** Very well. The hon. Minister will give the reply later.

**Shri U. C. Patnaik:** May I know whether *shorea robusta*, otherwise known as sal, which is also called the King of timber, has been examined and its possibilities explored through the Governments of Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa where sal timber abounds in the forests?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** Sal timber is very good; it has got twenty years' life. (*Interruption*).

**Mr. Speaker:** He is answering. What is the hurry?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** Sal timber is good and it is accepted by the Railway Board for sleepers. But the point is we are in short supply.

**Shri U. C. Patnaik:** I want to know whether they have corresponded with the concerned State Governments, because *shorea robusta* abounds in the forests of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** We are exploring all possibilities of getting the sleepers internally.

**Shri Tyagi:** It is not a definite reply to the question whether the State Governments were consulted or not.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members are putting a question to the hon. Minis-

ter whether the sal timber is not good. He says it is good, and he further says it is in short supply. How does he know that it is in short supply, unless he has corresponded either through those Governments or otherwise? Should we put all those supplementaries also like "How does he come to know?" It is not right.

Some hon. Members rose—

**Mr. Speaker:** One at a time. Sleepers are not going to fly away to the other world! Hon. Members will kindly be patient....

**Shri Vidya Charan Shukla:** May I know....

**Mr. Speaker:** I am not going to allow Mr. Shukla for the whole of this hour if he goes on persisting like this. I have allowed him once, twice, thrice and will allow him again. Hon. Members will notice that whosoever has tabled a question, I give him two or three chances and then go to the others and then come back to him, so that he may put the question after hearing all that. He ought not to monopolise the question hour like that. I will be very hard upon hon. Members who persist like that when I go from one Member to another and try to distribute the time as well as possible. He ought not to insist upon his being called. This is the only punishment I can give him. I will not call him for the next whole hour. Mr. Goray

**Shri Goray:** May I know whether the Government of India has tried cement concrete sleepers as they have been tried in China?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** Yes, we have tried it in the station yards and goods yards.

**Shri Goray:** What is the result?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** These are still in the experimental stage. Owing to climatic conditions cement concrete does not stand well: it expands and contracts too much and develops

cracks. Therefore we are not laying it in the open lines.

**Shri Goray:** How does the climate affect it? In Assam and West Coast areas.

**Mr. Speaker:** He says it is being tried.

**Shri Joachim Alva:** May I know whether the Railway Ministry is not aware that India possesses some of the finest forests in the world and the finest type of wood. Why does the Railway Ministry not exploring the utilisation of this wood?

**Mr. Speaker:** Nobody denies India has forests. The hon. Minister says it is in short supply.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I would like to place all the facts before the House.

**Shri Tyagi:** I challenge the statement of short supply.

**Mr. Speaker:** Let him place the facts.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** The procurement of wooden sleepers in the country stood at about 11 lakhs in 1951-52 and 16 lakhs in 1952-53. This was stepped up to 23 lakhs in 1955-56. With the impact of the Second Five Year Plan on other industries consuming wood like tea chest, plywood, river valley projects, house building, etc., the procurement fell down to 20.6 lakhs in 1956-57 and 19 lakhs in 1957-58. It may be stated that though the procurement of sleepers in 1954-55 was nearly double the procurement in 1951-52, the prices of sleepers were more or less the same as in 1951-52, while in 1956-57, 1957-58 and 1958-59 the procurement has gone down in spite of the fact that the prices have been increased.

The steps taken to step up the supply are: exploitation of inaccessible areas; acceptance of evergreen species, hitherto considered unsuitable, after treatment with a preservative; tapping of forests in Andhra, Coorg and the Andamans which did

not supply sleepers previously; relaxation of specifications and acceptance of rejected sleepers and using them on the lower gauge; tapping adjoining States of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan; accepting trade sizes larger than the standard size in some cases; banning export of sleepers to Pakistan, Sudan, etc.; and earmarking the use of sal on Railways only for sleepers.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Shukla. (Lough-ter).

**Shri Vidya Charan Shukla:** I wanted to know whether there was an offer of Brazilian sleepers at much lower prices than those at which sleepers have been purchased from Australia; if so, why no order has been placed with the Brazilian manufacturers of sleepers.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** The Brazilian offer has got a story of its own.....

**Some hon. Members:** Sir, we cannot hear.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Brazilian offer has got a story of its own. Let not the story be too long!

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I will cut it short by saying that allegations were made which were found to be false.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** Sir, may I ask a question, because my question is the first and my name happens to be on the first question?

**Mr. Speaker:** Very well. It relates to Kerala also.

**Shri Ranga:** If you allow too many questions to be answered it is not convenient either to the Minister or to the Members.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members will bear that in mind.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** In answer to one of the supplementaries the hon. Minister stated that the matter about the supply of cast iron sleepers was under

investigation. I want to know whether in the meanwhile for the supply of the defective suppliers the particular firm has been blacklisted or whether orders for supplies have been repeated.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I would require notice for that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Next question. The hon. Minister has already said....

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** The amount is Rs. 79 lakhs, not a small sum.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is why the hon. Minister says that the matter has been placed in the hands of the C.I.D. They are investigating.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** I am informed that they have been given a repeat order despite the fact that it is under investigation. I want to get it verified.

**Mr. Speaker:** Very well. Shrimati Mafida Ahmed. Why did she not get up earlier?

**Shrimati Mafida Ahmed:** May I know the name of the firm which supplied the defective sleepers and what were the considerations for awarding the contract to this firm?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** Sir, I do not know whether I can mention the name; the matter is still under investigation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Why not?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** I will take your orders, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the name very important?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. What is the name of the person or firm that has taken away Rs. 79 lakhs?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** M/s Hanuman Foundries Limited, Dalloah, Calcutta.

### Remodelling of Kazipet Railway Yard

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\*733 { **Shri T. B. Vittal Rao:**  
**Shri E. Madhusudan Rao:**

Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) the amount spent upto the end of October, 1958 out of Rs. 14 lakhs provided in the budget for 1958-59 for the remodelling of the Yard at Kazipet, Central Railway;

(b) the reasons for the shortfall; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to accelerate the pace of work?

**The Deputy Minister of Railways (Shri S. V. Ramaswamy):** (a) No expenditure has been incurred so far on the scheme proper, as the work has not yet been started.

(b) and (c). The design of the layout for providing 2250 ft. clear standing room on the lines instead of 1800 ft., as originally proposed, is still under examination. The work will commence after the scheme has been finalised and the revised estimate is sanctioned.

**Shri T. B. Vittal Rao:** It is stated that the scheme is under examination. May I know whether it is under examination by the Railway Administration or by the Railway Board?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** The Administration and the Board mean the same thing.

**Shri T. B. Vittal Rao:** Railway Administration is the Central Railway.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswamy:** That does not matter, any how. It is under investigation. As soon as the investigation is completed, we shall proceed with the work.

**Shri T. B. Vittal Rao:** In view of the fact that this Railway Station is very much congested and the volume of traffic is very high, may I know,