

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Minister may read them out.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: We propose to operate these lines from the 1st of next year, even before the new aircraft arrive, with Dakota aircraft; and when the new aircraft arrive, we shall operate those aircraft on these lines. These routes are:

- (i) Delhi-Agra-Gwalior-Bhopal-Indore-Aurangabad-Bombay;
- (ii) Madras-Tiruchirapalli-Madura-Trivandrum - Cochin - Coimbatore-Bangalore-Madras.
- (iii) Delhi - Bikaner - Jodhpur-Ahmedabad-Rajkot; and
- (iv) Madras-Bangalore-Coimbatore-Cochin-Trivandrum-Madura-Tiruchirapalli-Madras.

Shrimati Tarkeshwari Sinha: May I know the names of the countries in which this particular aircraft is operating?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: I have not got that information.

Shri S. V. Ramaswamy: May I know how many district centres are not connected by air services, and whether there is a plan to connect in the first instance, all the district headquarters

Shri Jaipal Singh: Arising out of the answer given by the hon. Minister, may I ask.....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Order, order. We have spent a lot of time over this question already. Each question cannot be made the subject-matter of a discussion. If hon. Members want—I am afraid tomorrow, we are concluding this Session—there are provisions for raising half an hour discussions, one hour discussions, one and half an hour discussions, two hour discussions, two and half hour discussions etc., and whoever is interested may table a request to have such discussions.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: But we do not get half an hour even.

TENDER SYSTEM

***1575. Pandit D. N. Tiwary:** Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the system of calling for tenders for transport handling on various Railways is being disregarded, and instead such contracts are settled by negotiations;

(b) the reasons for this change-over from tender to negotiation system; and

(c) the number of contracts both through tender and negotiations given on the North Eastern Railway in 1953 and 1954?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Shahnawaz Khan): (a) and (b). Contracts for handling are generally let out on tender. On rare occasions however, they are let out by negotiations in the interests of expeditious work.

(c) During 1953 no handling contracts were awarded either on tender or negotiation. In 1954 one was allotted on tender and another by negotiation.

Pandit D. N. Tiwary: May I know what benefits are derived by the Railways by settling the handling contracts by negotiations, or what loss does it suffer?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: As I have stated in my reply earlier, it is done in the interests of expeditious work.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: May I know whether it is a fact that in the railways, sometimes, even the highest tenders are changed after opening all the tenders, and the contractor who gives the lowest tender is debarred from getting the contract?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: May I state one thing in this connection? There

is no use hon. Members saying that generally corruption is rampant in the railways. Only such questions must be brought before Parliament, in which particular cases are brought to the notice of the hon. Minister. There is no use generally asking, 'Is there this kind of serious corruption?', saying that highest tenders are subsequently converted into lowest tenders, and so on and so forth. Particular instances must be brought to notice. Otherwise, it is a rambling question which cannot admit of any particular answer.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: With your permission, I am ready to give the information. Before this, I have already sent a letter to the hon. Minister, and if you would permit me, I shall send another letter on the same.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Hon. Members are aware that no hon. Member needs my permission for sending a letter to the Hon. Minister of Railways. Though I am sitting here, I feel as if I am sitting there, and I am also equally anxious to get as much information about this subject as possible. All that I am submitting for the consideration of hon. Members is that if they have any particular cases in their mind, they should first of all write to the hon. Minister.....

Shri Jagjivan Ram: With your permission,

Mr. Deputy-Speaker:.....and if no remedy is obtained, then they can bring it up before this House. Otherwise, it is useless. Even with respect to the other cases where suggestions are to be made such as that the district headquarters have to be connected and so on, I would say that those suggestions can be sent to the hon. Minister first; and if he refuses to answer, then here is the highest court or the supreme court, where hon. Members can bring to notice any remissness or refusal on the part of the

hon. Minister. Otherwise, bringing in details is rather inconvenient, and it takes away the time of the House.

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: Arising out of the ruling that you gave yesterday as well as today, I want to know this. Are we not entitled to ask a question whether it is a fact or not that in his Ministry the highest tender are reduced to the lowest tender? Can we not ask this question?

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: This is not never done.

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: This is not for you to answer. It is for the Deputy-Speaker.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I shall answer that.

Shri Gadgil: It is normally not done.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: Normally not done.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Hon. Members need not talk across the benches. A point has been raised as to whether it is the ruling that such a question ought not to be put. If it is a question whether the highest tenders are accepted or the lowest tenders, that is another matter. But the hon. Member who puts a general question assumes that the lowest tender ought to be accepted under normal rules, that in particular cases, the highest tenders have been accepted and converted into lowest tenders, and that some such malpractices have been done. It is not as if on a matter of policy a question is asked as to what exactly the practice is—that I am not disallowing; but when it is alleged that the practice or the rule is one of contravention of the rules in general terms, and a question is asked, are not such contraventions going on, then that is something which cannot be admitted absolutely, because it does not admit of a specific answer. That is all my point.

Shri T. N. Singh: May I know whether it is a fact that tenders are invited and then even after that, negotiations are made? May I know under what provision of Government rules this is done?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Are there any such cases? I would like the question to be split up. There is no good saying 'When did you leave beating your mother?' This is assuming that such malpractices exist and asking, what has been done? Let it be split up into two questions. Are there cases, recently or otherwise, where negotiations were started after the highest tenders are put in contrary to the rules?

The Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri L. B. Shastri): It will not be quite correct to say that it is a malpractice to accept a tender which is not the lowest. It is not binding on the Government to accept the lowest tender. There may be occasions when the administration considers it necessary to accept a higher tender, because the contractor or the firm is a recognised firm and we have got full knowledge of the fact that they have done the work previously very well. Sometimes the lowest tender has resulted in nothing: the work was not turned up. Therefore, it is quite wrong to suggest that if always the lowest tender is not accepted, it means a malpractice. That is the first point. The second point is this. I do not know what the hon. Member means when he says 'the highest tenders are converted into lowest tenders'. I do not understand the meaning of that: they cannot be converted.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: Converted after the opening of tenders.

Shri L. B. Shastri: What is there is there. But I would like to say, as you have very rightly said, that if Members have any suspicion against the acceptance of a particular tender, they should write to me and I am prepared to give adequate information.

Shri T. N. Singh: My reference was to the report of the Public Accounts Committee in which several cases have been referred to already where even after invitation of tenders, contracts were given by negotiations subsequently.

Shri L. B. Shastri: I might tell the hon. Member that I do not remember what has happened about the cases referred to recently by the Public Accounts Committee. But in a number of cases where negotiations took place after having received the tenders, it is generally done in the case of global tenders and the railways have definitely benefited by means of negotiations. And I have some information that the Public Accounts Committee are satisfied on that point because it has resulted in some gain for the railways and economy for the railways. Therefore, the Public Accounts Committee have also felt that those negotiations have been beneficial to the railways.

Pandit D. N. Tiwary: In answer to my question, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary said that for expeditious...

Pandit Munishwar Datt Upadhyay: May I suggest that there should be no debate on this? This is Question Hour.

Pandit D. N. Tiwary: The Parliamentary Secretary said that for expeditious disposal, contracts are settled by negotiations. May I know how the calling in of tenders prevents expeditious disposal of the matter?

Shri Shahnawaz Khan: The hon. Member had asked a question specifically about the settlement of contracts by negotiations on the North Eastern Railway. In my reply I said there was one such case in 1954. That case related to the work pertaining to the Kosi project. The hon. the Chief Minister of Bihar came here, to Delhi, himself and pressed the hon. Railway Minister to expedite the giving out of tenders because work was being held up. So under direct orders

of the Railway Board these negotiations were started on the pressure exerted upon us by the Chief Minister of Bihar.

INDIAN SHIPPING

***1576. Pandit Munishwar Datt Upadhyay:** Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any difficulty in getting adequate cargoes for Indian ships in overseas trade at present;

(b) the number of Indian ships engaged in overseas trade; and

(c) whether any new routes are contemplated for Indian ships engaged in overseas trade?

The Deputy Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Alagesan): (a) So far as the Government are aware, Indian ships employed in overseas trades are generally able to secure sufficient cargoes.

(b) 28 ships of a total gross registered tonnage of 189,691.

(c) The matter is under examination by the Government in consultation with the Indian Shipowners.

Pandit Munishwar Datt Upadhyay: May I know what is the approximate percentage of trade that is being carried on by foreign ships in respect of Indian cargoes?

Shri Alagesan: At present we are carrying only a very small percentage—6 to 7 per cent.

Pandit Munishwar Datt Upadhyay: What percentage of the coastal trade is carried on by foreign ships?

Shri Alagesan: The coastal trade is entirely reserved for Indian ships.

Shri Kasliwal: May I know whether Government are working on any scheme for the reservation of coastal trade entirely for Indian shipping?

Shri Alagesan: From 1950, we had decided to reserve coastal trade for Indian shipping, and in 1952 it has been entirely reserved for Indian shipping.

Shri Velayudhan: In order to avoid competition from foreign shipping companies, what steps have Government taken for protective Indian shipping so that cargo may be taken abroad by them?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: This refers not to coastal shipping, but generally, to world shipping.

Shri Alagesan: Overseas trade is a competitive work, and shipping is in the private sector. Shipping companies are trying to send as much cargo as possible. Whenever they bring their difficulties to us, we also try to help them.

Pandit Munishwar Datt Upadhyay: How many of our ships are engaged in carrying foreign cargoes?

Shri Alagesan: I said 28, with a total tonnage of 1,89,691.

Shri Sarangadhar Das: In view of the assurance—or rather the decision of Government—to reserve all coastal shipping for Indian ships, how do Government reconcile the anomaly of cargoes for tankers going to ships other than Indian ships? How do they propose to reserve that also for Indian shipping?

Shri Alagesan: When the agreement was entered into, there were no tankers on the Indian registry. Even so, a provision has been made in the agreement that tankers which are owned solely by Government or by corporations in which Government have the majority of shares should be utilised for this. We have also decided to acquire two tankers for this purpose.

INFORMATION ON AGRICULTURE

***1578. Shri Sanganna:** Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state: