

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, March 2, 1993/Phalguna
11, 1914 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at

Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

[English]

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh): Sir, I have given notice of a motion for suspension of the Question Hour to discuss the matter regarding the latest development in Tripura. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 101- Shri Chitta Basu.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Private Investment in Development Projects

*101. SHRI CHITTA BASU:
SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have de-

ecided to invite private investment in the development projects of the Indian Railways;

(b) if so, whether any offer has since been received from any prospective investor;

(c) the companies whose proposals have been received by the Government;

(d) the companies since permitted to make investment; and

(e) the details of works to be assigned to those companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI
MALLIKARJUN): (a) and (b). Yes, Sir.

(c) M/s. Tantia Construction Co. Ltd., Calcutta and Continental Construction Ltd., Delhi had offered to convert the Gondia-Chanda Fort Narrow Gauge Line into Broad Gauge.

(d) The offers received were incomplete and were, therefore, rejected.

(e) Does not arise.

SHRI ANNA JOSHI: Has he come back to Railways? We welcome him.

MR. SPEAKER: He is deputising.

(Interruptions)

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Sir, from the reply it is evident that the response from the private sector for the investment in the railway development projects is very poor and negligible. May I also remind the Minister that the Prime Minister, of late, also made an earnest appeal to the private sector at Nandyal to make investments in these railway projects? In this situation, may I know from the hon. Minister what are the reasons for the lack of response from the private sector for the investment in the railway projects?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, actually it will be very difficult for me to say about the lack of interest of the private sector. However, the railways have given all attractive propositions so that the private sector can be attracted to invest in the railway projects.

Sir, as this august House is aware, because of the resource crunch and also ambitious programmes which the Railways have taken up, the Administration felt that it is necessary that some private investment should come. That is how, for example, we have taken up gauge conversion and in this financial year, Sir, as per the programme we are completing it and for the next financial year also we have included it and we have taken up such a huge programme without the support of the Planning Commission from just the mobilisation of internal resources. That is how two Companies have come forward to convert the narrow gauge line from Gondia to Chanda Fort. But when tenders were opened, they were incomplete, they have not mentioned any amount and it is on the concept of 'build, operate and transfer'. Any way, the Railways will make..(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, he is no more a Minister of Railways. At present, he is the State Minister for Defence,

how he can reply the questions pertaining to Railways? This particular question is to be answered either by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways or by the Railway Minister himself. This is not understandable as to why the question which pertains to Railways, is being answered by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence.(Interruptions)

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, he should first seek your permission then only he can answer the question related to other Ministry. Without your permission how the Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence is answering the questions related to Railways.(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, at the same time the Railways are making constant effort to see how the private investment can be attracted in the railway projects.(Interruptions).

SHRI RAM KAPSE: Sir, the Defence Minister has come in defence of the Railways.(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please. I think the Railway Minister has some difficulty, somebody is sick in his family. I have allowed him to do it. He has written to me a letter.

SHRI KALKA DAS: Sir, he has failed in the Railways. So, he has been shifted to the other Ministry.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Sir, there are many priority areas in the development of Railways, namely, construction of new lines, gauge conversion, renewal of tracks, manufacture of wagons, coaches etc., which the Railways cannot undertake because of the resources crunch. May I know from the hon. Minister whether there are any proposals under the consideration of the Government

for offering some special concessions for the private companies including the foreign companies to invest in these areas of the Railways?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, I appreciate the concern of the hon. Member that since the Railways have a resources crunch, invitation to the private sector has become indispensable. So far as the offerings of special concessions are concerned, it all depends upon the coming forward of the investors and having negotiations with the Railways. Depending upon the outcome of the negotiations, the terms and conditions can be fixed.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has told the House that there are several private organisations which want to investment money in Railways. The hon. Minister should know that still there are such places in the country, where the local people have not seen a train till date. All these areas are backward and as a result of which regional imbalance is rapidly increasing in the country. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the list of the programmes prepared to eliminate the regional imbalances through private sector investment? These areas include many backward areas of Bundelkhand, Andhra Pradesh and hill areas of U.P.

[*English*]

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, the development of backward areas is getting top priority of the Railways and whatever necessary infrastructure has to be built, certainly the Railways will take care of it.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI: Mr.

Speaker, Sir, this is not the proper reply to my question. I need your intervention. I have asked a very important question that that are so many places in the country having no rail line and the people living there have not even seen a train. The economic condition of the Railways is very weak that is why you have invited private sector to make investment in the Railways. I would like to know about the schemes which are likely to be implemented with the assistance of Private sector investment?

MR. SPEAKER: It has no relevance with the original question. He is giving reply and you are raising objections to it.

[*English*]

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: For example, we have our own Wheel and Axle Plant and its annual installed capacity does not meet the requirements of the Railways. Therefore, we have given open invitation for the private sector to come forward and have a plant to produce about 30,000 wheels for diesel and electric locomotives. Some parties have come forward and tenders have been opened to establish a private sector Wheel and Axle Plant. However, these tenders have not been finalised. This is how we are trying to attract private investments.

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether the Government has prepared a list of projects which are identified as projects being offered to the private sector and whether any invitation has been given for such offers publicly.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, at the beginning we have offered one gauge conversion from Bondhya to Chandrapur. Apart from that we have also offered to the private sector to have their own wagon scheme. Because of the shortage of wagons, some of the industries were suffering as we were not able to supply the required number of

wagons. So, we have floated a scheme "Own your own Wagon". In this scheme, even though proper advertisement and everything is made, hardly three parties came forward. One is Tata Tea Ltd. Another is M/s Essar Gujarat Ltd. and the third one is Indian Oil Corporation. These three offer themselves to build their own wagons. Tata Tea want we rake and also specially constructed double decker. For design, it has been sent to RDSO. Essar Gujarat want three rakes. This has been finalised and a decision has been taken at the Board level and communication has been made. So far as the Indian Oil Corporation is concerned, it is under process.

SHRI ANNA JOSHI: This is the question on privatisation of projects and services of Railways.

May I ask through you, whether the Railways have decided to privatise the catering service on Railways and if it is so, how far it is done. In how much time, it will be completed.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Privatisation of catering has been a factor which has been agonising all sections for a long time. It has been decided that all existing departmental units shall not be privatised but in future that will be thought over.

Late Running of Trains

*102. MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN
CHANDRA KHANDURI:
SHRI KHELAN RAM JANGDE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of express, mail and superfast trains do not maintain punctuality;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Railways have laid down any norms to categories a train punctual or otherwise for the purpose of collecting statistical data;

(d) whether any provisions has been made to refund fare and provide other facilities like meals/snacks etc. in case of inordinate delay in running of a train;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the steps being taken to maintain punctuality of trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI
MALLIKARJUN): (a) to (f). A statement is
laid on the table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT

(a) Punctuality of Express, Mail and Superfast trains has been averaging between 82.0% and 85.1% since April 1992.

(b) Punctuality has not been satisfactory mainly on account of factors beyond the control of Railways like agitations, bandhs, alarm chain pulling by miscreants. Foggy weather and accidents.

(c) Mail/Express trains reaching destination upto 15 minutes late are taken as on time for statistical purposes.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

(f) Running of trains is being closely monitored to eliminate detentions which are within the control of Railways. Coordination with State Civil and Police authorities is regularly being maintained to eliminate detentions on account of agitations, bandhs and miscreants' activities including alarm chain pulling etc.