

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

*Tuesday, July 26, 1994/
Sravana 4, 1916 (Saka)*

*The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, I have to inform the House with profound sorrow of the passing away of one of our former colleagues, Shri Jagannath Mishra, who was a Member of Fifth Lok Sabha during 1971—77. He represented Madhubani Parliamentary Constituency of Bihar.

An educationist by profession, he had special interest in reading books on social reforms and politics and gardening. He was also a devoted social worker and had started several educational institutions, hospitals and libraries.

He actively participated in the proceedings of the House.

Shri Jagannath Mishra passed away on 24 July, 1994 at New Delhi at the age of 73 years.

We deeply mourn the loss of this friend and I am sure that the House would

join me in conveying our condolences to the bereaved family.

The House may now stand in silence for a short while as a mark of respect to the deceased.

11.02 hrs.

The Members then stood in silence for a short while

11.04 hrs.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

Tourist Circuits

*21. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have since decided to throw open the operation of its eight tourist circuits;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government have decided to invite global bids giving opportunity to domestic as well as foreign chains to run these circuits; and

(d) if so, the reasons thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINIS-

TER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF
PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI

MALLIKARJUN): (a) to (d) A Statement is
laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT

It has been decided to introduce 'Palace-on-Wheels' type tourist train services on the following tourist circuits:

- (i) Delhi-Jaipur-Agra-Gwalior-Jhansi (Khajuraho)-Varanasi-Lucknow-Delhi.
- (ii) Bombay-Aurangabad (Ajanta/Ellora)-Nanded-Secunderabad-Hyderabad-Pune-Bombay.
- (iii) Calcutta-Gaya (Rajgir/Nalanda)-Varanasi (Sarnath)-Gorakhpur (Lumbini/Kushinagar)-Bhubaneswar-Puri-Calcutta.
- (iv) Goa (Madagaon)-Mangalore-Mysore (Belur/Halebid)-Hospet (Hampi)-Bangalore-Goa (Madgaon).
- (v) Bangalore-Mysore-Madras-Kodaikanal Road-Kanniya Kumari-Trivandrum-Cochin-Mettupalayam (Ooty)-Bangalore.
- (vi) Delhi-Jaipur-Jodhpur-Jaisalmer-Sawai Madhopur-Bharatpur-Agra-Delhi.
- (vii) Delhi-Jaipur-Udaipur-Ahmedabad-Veraval-Palitana-Delhi.
- (viii) Madras-Pondicherry-Nagore-Karaikal/Velankini-Tiruchchirapalli-Madurai-Rameswaram-Thanjavur-Chidambaram-Madras.

While global bids have been invited for the ownership, marketing and management of the tourist trains listed at S Nos. (i)—(v), on the remaining circuits listed at S Nos. (vi)—(viii) it has been decided to launch the tourist train services in collaboration with the Tourism Development Corporations of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. Global bids were invited up to 25th July, 1994, for attracting investment in tourist train infrastructure. The initial response to the scheme has been encouraging.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Sir, the decision of the Government to allow the pri-

vate companies, foreign and indigenous, in the circuit railways is, I think, a part of a greater programme of the Government of privatising certain functions of the Railway as a whole. Will the Minister be kind enough to indicate the other areas of Railways functioning, which are now being sought or are being thought of being opened to the private investment and private management? May I also know from the Hon. Minister, what will be the ultimate residuary functions of the Railway Department as the Government's undertaking or are they thinking in terms of abolishing the Railways as a public sector undertaking and giving all the powers to the private companies?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, there is a slight deviation in the question. Anyway, there is no question of privatisation of Railways as a whole. But under the New Economic Policy, to encourage tourism, eight tourist circuits have been identified; out of which three circuits are being operated by the Railways with the collaboration of Tourism Development Corporation in respect of three States—Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

As regards the rest of the five circuits, we have asked for bids from the private bidders. The last date was the 25th July and yesterday only about 23 bids have been received. After evaluation whichever is the highest bid that will be given. This is only for encouraging the tourists and the participation of the private sector in this. But there is no question of privatising the Railways as a whole. It will remain in the public sector.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: The global bids also envisage ownership, marketing and management. May I know from the hon. Minister what is the ambit of this ownership? Will the trains be owned by the companies, will railway tracks be owned by the companies and what about other paraphernalia of the railway administration? Who will own them? Then, there is the question of fixing the tariff and sharing of the revenue. What is the principle of fixing the tariff if it is handed over to the private management and what would be the revenue sharing between the Government and private companies?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: The trains will be owned by the private companies at a cost of Rs. 20 crores. But so far as the operation and haulage are concerned, providing locomotive, crew and ground staff, all that will be looked after by the Railways itself. Because they are looked after by the Railways, the companies will

pay about Rs. 10 to 12 lakhs per trip towards the maintenance, haulage and all these things. But the ownership would be with the private company and Rs. 20 crores has been estimated. It will be a train of 21 coaches containing among others 13 air-conditioned coaches having sleeper class, with one standby and two air-conditioned dining cars and two power cars. So, it will have 21 coaches. The cost comes to Rs. 20 crores which will be borne by the company.

As far as returns are concerned, whichever party offers 15 per cent, that will be honoured.

[Translation]

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Palace on wheels is proposed to be introduced by main pilgrimage places which include Calcutta-Gaya, and Rajgir-Nalanda circuits also. This circuit falls in my constituency. But there is no railway line between Gaya and Rajgir. The Government of Japan also provided financial aid for developing Buddhist pilgrim places. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the steps proposed to be taken to lay railway line between Gaya and Rajgir to introduce Palace on wheels for this circuit.

[English]

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, the hon. Member knows much better than me because he belongs to that area and constituency. If at all there is no track between Gaya and Rajgir, it has to be provided because it has become one of the circuits.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: Sir, three years back Palace on Wheels was introduced on the metre gauge system. But after gauge conversion what has happened to that Palace on Wheels?

Secondly, I would like to know whether the economic viability has been studied after introduction of these eight circuits and whether there will be any hurdles or difficulties in regard to passenger services also.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, there should not be any hurdles for the passenger services because the timings are adjusted in such a manner. This is a tourist train and it is a trip for one week.

The hon. Member has asked: what will happen to the Palace on Wheels after the conversion into broad gauge. The Palace on Wheels will be utilised in collaboration with the Tourism Development Corporation of Gujarat in one of the circuits and that circuit is Delhi-Jaipur-Udaipur-Ahmedabad-Viraval-Palitana-Delhi. So, that train will be utilised. This is again a metre gauge section.

[Translation]

DR. GIRIJA VYAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, when you were the Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism it was due to your efforts that Palace on Wheels was made fully air-conditioned with a hope that Palace on Wheels would give a new boost to tourism not only in Rajasthan but in the country as a whole. I am glad to state that 40 to 45 per cent tourists visit Rajasthan and most of them visit due to attraction for Palace on Wheels. As per the present situation, at some places there is broad gauge while at the others there is metre gauge. Thus Rajasthan has both metre as well as broad gauge line. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the southern route of Rajasthan which would - as you have stated just now—cover Delhi, Udaipur and Gujarat, would satisfy the tourists, because present route covers Jaipur-Ajmer-Udaipur-Jodhpur-Agra? I would like to

know the action proposed to be taken in the prevailing situation?

Secondly, I would like to submit that South Rajasthan has not been provided broad gauge as yet, that is the reason why I have been raising the matter time and again. The private companies which are interested to take up the project are not taking the initiative because entire Rajasthan is gripped in the dispute of broad gauge and metre gauge, I would like to know the steps being taken by the Ministry in this regard?

[English]

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, the conversion programme has been taken up and now a part of the route has been converted into broad gauge. A time will come when the rest also will be converted.

So far as the hon. Member's question about the train coming to Agra, Delhi, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer is concerned, there is a provision for that. This is being done in collaboration with the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation. In lieu of this, a Palace on Wheels type of tourism train is going to be developed and this route is going to be covered.

SHRI ANNA JOSHI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the first part of my question is that the bids have been invited but what about the infrastructure of the rail route the platforms, the rails, the cleanliness, the timings and the efficiency? Then, what about the protection and all those things which are the problems that our railways are now facing? Have you called for the tenders only for this tourist train or for infrastructure also? Here you have mentioned that you have called bids for investment in tourist train infrastructure. In this tourist

train infrastructure different from your regular infrastructure of the rails? If it is so, then what is the infrastructure?

The third part of my question is: have you completed all the requirements of the railways commuters in general throughout India? There are so many parts of the country where trains have not even been seen by the people. But you are not worrying about them. You are worrying only about the tourists, and for that you are inviting crores of rupees from outside. You are also asking the Tourism Department to spend. So, have you completed the basic requirements of the common railway passengers? He is not getting anything.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Sir, it is the constant effort of the Government to see that the basic requirements of the commuters are met all over the country. However, this scheme is mostly in relation to the tourists. As you know, Sir, when foreign tourists come, we earn foreign exchange also. An action plan by the Tourism Department has been made that at least by 1996-97, there will be five million tourists which will give us foreign exchange to the tune of Rs. 14,000 to Rs. 18,000 crore. It is not the objective of the Government that we will have things only for the tourists all over. The primary objective of the Government is to provide all necessary amenities and all possible facilities to the commuters within the country.

So far as the infrastructure is concerned, whatever is existing stations and the ground staff—all that will be provided to the operators.

[Translation]

Industrial Status to Agriculture

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*22. SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN,
SHARAN SINGH:
SHRI ARVIND TRIVEDI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to grant the status of an industry to agriculture;

(b) if so, the objective thereof;

(c) the manner in which it is likely to benefit the farmers;

(d) the details of steps taken in this regard and progress made so far; and

(e) if not, the time by which the final decision is likely to be taken?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) to (e). The draft Agriculture Policy Resolution prepared by the Government, seeks to create a positive trade and investment climate for agriculture at par with industry. The objective is to develop effective systems and bestow similar benefits on agriculture as exist in industry. This would help in creating favourable economic climate for increasing farmers' own investment and efforts for development of agriculture, thereby increasing their income levels. The Resolution was placed in Parliament on 14.5.1993.