

[Translation]

When a Private Members Bill was moved at that time you had given an assurance in the House that you would bring a bill on this very soon.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : I have sensed the mood of the House. As the hon. Member has pointed out, this is a long pending Bill.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh) : Without sensing the mood of the House, you are not willing to do anything.

SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM : I am coming to it. It is hanging for the past 25 years. Through its Common Minimum Programme the present Government is committed to bring a comprehensive legislation on Agricultural Labourers.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : When will it be brought?

SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM : I am coming to it, Sir. It is reflected in the President's Address also. The Bill is ready. Meanwhile, a lot of State Governments have opposed Central legislation.

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE (Ratnagiri) : Which are the States which have objected to it?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : We must know the States which are objecting to it.

SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM : You please listen to me. The States of Punjab, Maharashtra... (Interruptions)

SHRI SURESH PRABHU (Rajapur) : It is not true... (Interruptions)

SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM : Major agricultural States are opposing it. Therefore, to implement it, we need the cooperation of the State Governments. The Government has decided to convene a meeting of the Chief Ministers and also the Labour Ministers of the States during the recess period of this Session. After that, we will bring a Bill in the month of April.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) : And will it be passed like the Women's Reservation Bill? ... (Interruptions)

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer) : You had given assurance on the Women Reservation Bill also. Will this bill meet the blame fate?

[English]

SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM : I hope we will be able to pass it with your cooperation.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) : Our cooperation is there but will you bring it and get it passed?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : What about the Minimum Wages Act for the agricultural labourers?

SHRI RAM NAIK : We are supporting it but we do not want verbal assurances. The Government is not serious. A Bill which is brought in this House, which is agreed by all, is not being passed. The Government is not finding time to pass it. The Women's Bill is not being passed and now an assurance is coming from the Minister... (Interruptions) We are supporting it.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : Why are you comparing one Bill with another? When we are raising an issue about the agricultural labourers, why are you raising the issue of the Women's Bill?... (Interruptions) It seems you want to stop both the Bills.

SHRI RAM NAIK : We want both the Bills ... (Interruptions)

RAILWAY BUDGET — 1997-98  
DEMANDS FOR GRANTS ON ACCOUNT —  
(RAILWAYS), 1997-98  
DEMANDS FOR EXCESS GRANTS —  
(RAILWAYS), 1994-95  
DEMANDS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY GRANTS —  
(RAILWAYS), 1996-97 Cont.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : We have resumed the discussion on the Railway Budget.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Yesterday, Shri Krishnadas was on his legs.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : It is on record that he has concluded his speech.

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : Sir, the Railway Minister is discriminating our State. But you too, Sir!

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) : In the Business Advisory Committee meeting yesterday it was decided that we would sit up to nine o'clock yesterday but we did not sit late. For today, kindly clarify whether we are going to sit till all speakers have spoken or not. In the Business Advisory Committee meeting it was agreed that we would sit throughout the night today, if necessary. Please guide us.

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : If need be, we will sit late in the night.

[English]

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : I have not concluded my speech yesterday, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : It is on record that you have concluded.

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : I am very sorry, Sir, I did not conclude my speech yesterday.

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Now, your speech has concluded. It is the record. Seven Minutes were given. You have spoken for 13 minutes.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : In this way discussion will not conclude.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA (Jaipur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, hon'ble Railway Minister has presented his railway budget wherein he has stated repeatedly that he would not neglect any state and he would keep this thing in mind. I would like to draw the attention of hon'ble Railways Minister towards those points which he had uttered himself. When he visited Jaipur to inaugurate the zonal office and hon'ble Prime Minister was also present there at that time I had made a submission in that regard. In response to that Shri Deve Gowda had said that whatever Bhargava Sahab was saying should be fulfilled.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Where did inauguration take place?

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : Location has not been decided so far. You and Kalmadi ji had inaugurated the extension of railway line upto Agra-Bandikui. But I do not know what kind of inauguration has done. I do not know whether he had performed Bhoomi Pujan or inaugurated the railway line. Inauguration means to commence the construction of railway line. But railway line has not been laid till date. Therefore, I would like to submit here that due to this there is a loss of Rs. 30 lakhs per day and the transportation has come to stand still and the passengers are facing difficulties. If a person wants to go from Jaipur to Marudhar and any other place, he has to perform a journey of 357 Kilometres unnecessarily. The train passes via Sawai-Madhopur and if railway line is extended upto Bandikui-Agra, it will have to cover a total distance of 113 kilometre only. That means, at present it has to cover a distance of 153 kilometres unnecessarily.

There is a loss of time and money and a loss of Rs. 30 lakhs is being suffered daily due to the non-construction of new line. Many M.Ps. and myself had met the hon. Minister and he had given assurance that he would include this project in the normal scheme instead of BOLT Scheme in which he himself has lost faith, thank you very much for included this project in the normal scheme. But Rs. 1 crore have been provided to lay the 113 kilometres long railway line. This amount is insufficient. Hence, I request that when railway is suffering loss in this way the amount provided should be on the basis of Rs. 30 lakhs per day the line would be laid. If that is done The cost of this project is hundred crores instead of one crore. Therefore, you should provide a sum of Rs. hundred crores. Today you are in

the ruling party but when you were in the opposition then also you used to listen. So exclude this project from BOLT Scheme and sanction Rs. hundred crores instead of one crore for this year so that railway line which had been anaugurated by Kalmadi Sahab can be extended from Jaipur to Agra. People will praise you, they will feel joy and Jaipur would be linked with North-East areas of the country.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Bhargava ji, only raise the issues because in this way you can not conclude your speech within five or seven minutes.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, It would be an injustice to me. I want to speak about Rajasthan.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Every member would desire to speak about his state.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : I would like to make some important submissions about Rajasthan.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Well, in that case, we shall have to sit late in the night.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir hon. Railway Minister has said that Rajdhani express would be run once a week but it would not be beneficial. It should be run daily. You have said that it should be run between Delhi and Ahmedabad. In this connection I suggest that it should be run via Abu, Ajmer and in that case the people would certainly be benefited. Therefore, I request that Rajdhani express should be run daily. Due to the single track it can run twice a week on first day it may undertake the UP Journey and the other day the Down journey. The time schedule of this train should be adjusted that it arrives at Jaipur in the morning and reaches Delhi upto 9.30 A.M. so that the people can return to Jaipur by the evening after completing their work. Thirdly, I would like to submit that you have started a train to Madras thrice a week. I had requested you earliear that an way to Madras there is a place named Renigunta fromwhere Tirupati Balaji is 20 kilometres away. If someone goes to Madras he can not go to Tirupati Balaji on his return journey. I request that this train should be run via Resiquanta so that the people could visit the shrine of Tirupati Balaji Resiquanta is situated on half way to Vijaywada.

Fourthly, in the same way a train should be run between Jaipur and Bawal which is on Jaipur-Delhi route via Rewari, Bhiwadi, Palwal so as to extend the railway line upto Bhiwadi industrial town of Rajasthan. For this a survey has already been conducted as per the reply given to one of my questions on this issue.

Roadways buses go upto Jaipur via Bahrod, Bhiwadi, Shahpura, Daruhera, Manorpur Chanbagi and Achrol. Consequent upon the construction of this railway line there would be double track between Jaipur and Delhi and as a result of that all the industrial cities

[Shri Girdhari Lal Bhargava]

falling between these cities would be liked with the railway. I request you to consider this railway line sympathetically.

In the same way now a days many people go to Haridwar from Jaipur via Delhi. If you introduce a new train in place of 13UP/14DN, Ajmer, Pushkar and Haridwar would be linked by railway line and the journey would become more convenient for the passengers.

Earlier a metre gauge line was there between Jaipur and Diggi Toda Raisingh. This line was dismantled saying that it would be replaced by a broad gauge line but it has not been constructed till date as a result of which people are facing a lot of difficulties. Whenever I go to this area people complain to me and demand to construct this line expeditiously. As I requested you earlier also that if this line is converted into broad gauge and extended upto Bhilwara the people would get direct train from Jaipur to Haridwar. Today there is no direct train. At the same time two bogies should be attached to Pooja express at Jaipur for Sawai Madopur and from there these bogies should be attached to Dehradun express so that they can reach Haridwar at 11.00 A.M. Alternatively these bogies can be brought to Delhi and from these bogies be attached to Masoorie express. It will make the journey to Haridwar quite convenient. I want that hon'ble Railway Minister should consider my suggestion seriously.

I would like to make one more submission. It is not too big a task for you but for me it is of utmost importance. Durgapura and Gandhinagar colonies are parts of Jaipur and 2955UP/2956DN and 2413UP/2414DN trains pass through these colonies. But these trains do not stop there as stoppage has not been provided there either for UP or DN journeys. We want that traffic should be decongested in Jaipur and maximum facilities should be provided to the people at the nearest point of their homes because if the passenger hires an auto-rickshaw, it will result in consumption of Petrol besides wastage of time and money.

Therefore, my submission is that if the Mumbai bound train is provided a halt at Durgapura and the Pooja Express at Gandhinagar during the upward and downward journeys, I think it would save both money and petrol.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, likewise a container service should be started from Jaipur. You have agreed to introduce it. As the container service is not available at Jaipur, the State Government has to pay to the businessmen to send the containers to Mumbai. Therefore, my submission is that the container service should be started from Kanakpura. It would save the expenses of the State Government and the businessmen would also be benefited. Please do tell while replying

to the debate as to when are you going to start the container service at Jaipur.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, I would like to bring it to the notice of the Hon. Minister that it was announced to set up a zonal office at Jaipur and it was said that it's approval will be granted within seven days but nothing has been done in this regard till date. The site of the office has not yet been finalised. The site of the office is there but the lay out plan has not yet been passed. My submission is that the announcement made by the Hon. Minister should be and a zonal office be set up at the earliest at Jaipur.

Further, my submission is that Kota Zone which has been attached with Mumbai zonal office should be linked with Jaipur Zonal office since Kota is in Rajasthan and Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan is only 240 Kilometers from Kota whereas Mumbai is 920 Kilometers away from Kota. Therefore, Kota Zone should also be included in Jaipur Zonal Office. Likewise a workshop for the maintenance of enquires should be set up at Bandhikui, where engines of Jaipur, Rewari and Agra can be repaired and maintained. At present engines are sent to Ajmer for repairs and maintenance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, Jaipur city continues to be crowded. Therefore, the entry of Hassanpur-II should be opened. Platform should be constructed there so that entry can be made there from the northern part. A platform should be constructed at Gandhinagar so that entry can be possible from the Southern part there. The other facilities like availability of tickets etc. should be extended at Hassanpur and Gandhinagar besides constructing platforms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, my another submission is that computerisation has been done at Jaipur railway station but the printers installed there work very slowly as a result of which the crowd gathers there. The old computers of Delhi have been sent to Jaipur and the new computers have been set up at Delhi. Therefore, my submission is that new computers and printers should be installed at Jaipur so that the work can be done speedily. Due to the old computers, a lot of problems arise in cancellation of tickets. My submission is that this problem should be solved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, there is no P.R.S. Office at Jaipur. The Hon. Minister has assured to open it in the University Campus it is alright, but I would like to submit that apart from the University it should also be set up at Subhash Chowk and Vidyadhar Nagar so that the people of Jaipur can avail the facility of reservation. My submission is that these offices should be set up in the walled city also, so that the people can have the facilities.

Sir, there is a Shatabdi Train from Ajmer for Jaipur but it has been made a passenger train by providing halts at several places. Half an Hour could be saved by reducing it's halts so that it can run like a Shatabdi Train and reach here in time. This train does not run on

Sunday. It is also not good. Please consider it and such an arrangement should be made so that this train may run on Sunday also. There is a dire need of a daily train between Jaipur and Mumbai. Likewise the number of reserved coaches should be increased in Jodhpur Howrah Train. We have a limited quota. Even the residents of Jaipur have less quota in Pooja Express. Therefore, my submission is that the quota in Pooja Express should be increased.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, my submission to the hon. Minister through you is that under political pressure unnecessary halts have been provided to the Intercity Express train due to which it reaches here late. It steams off from Jaipur at 6.00 A.M. and reaches, Delhi at 2.30 P.M. when its arrival time here is 11.00 A.M. but it never reaches here in time. It appears as if to please several leaders its halts have been increased and this Intercity Express has been converted into a passenger train. My submission in this regard is that its halts should be reduced. A ring railway for Jaipur is to be constructed but the people are encroaching the land of railways illegally. Therefore, my submission is that a railway line should be laid on it the earliest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, the senior citizens of the age of 65 years and above have been given a concession of 25 percent. I would like to submit that a person retires in 58 years, therefore, he should get this facility at the age of 60 years. Therefore, the age of senior citizen should be reduced from 65 years to 60 years. My submission is that a senior citizen gets 50 percent concession in air travel but the 25 percent concession in railway is very less. Therefore, my submission is that this concession should be increased from 25 percent to 50 percent. My other submission is that an attendant should also be allowed with the senior citizen and he should also be given 50 percent concession in fare so that the old man can have his company for his look after and help. My submission is that while replying to the debate on the Railway Budget an announcement to this effect should be made. Shri Mahavir ji is a holy place of the Jain Community. The train should be provided a halt there also so that the Jain pilgrims can get down there to visit that place.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : I agree that the train should not be provided a halt unnecessarily. When the Hon. Members propose for a project it does not create a problem for us but when they insist on providing a halt of the train then it becomes a problem. We have to face it under the pressure of the public. My submission to all the Hon. Members is that please pressurise for all others things, I would find out a solution to all these, except providing a halt of the train. It is a little bit difficult. If the train stops at a place, it affects the other stations and the other trains. You have given a good suggestion that the Intercity Express, the scheduled arrival time of which is 11.30 A.M. but it reaches at 1.30 P.M. since it has to stop at unnecessary places.

SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN (Chandigarh) : Shri Ram Vilas Paswan ji, it is an important religious spot of the Jain Community...*(Interruptions)* We have simply urged upon you to stop a train there...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : It is an important place for the Jain throughout India and Jain visit Mahaveer from each and every corner of the country. Therefore, my submission is that the train should be provided a halt at Alwar, Harsoli, Mumbai, Sawai Madhopur and Mathura.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You have been speaking for the last 15 minutes. Now please conclude.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : I am to speak a little about Rajasthan.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Everyone will speak about his State.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : My submission is that the train should be provided a halt at Nawai. After nawai, there comes Vanasthali. Vanasthali is a big educational institution. If the train does not stop there then how the people would reach there. There are some other trains. A train can be introduced from Jaipur via Kota, Ujjain and Indore to Bhopal and from Trivendrum (Bangalore). From Gauhati (Mail Superfast) Train should be introduced. From Kanyakumari to Jaipur, a train should be introduced. A train should be introduced from Goa. A train should be introduced from Jabalpur via Agra and the Ajmer-Bareilly train should be run daily. Likewise Marudhar should run daily likewise Tamilnadu Express runs...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Let him speak.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : If Tamilnadu Express is provided a halt of two minutes at Agra Cantonment, the people would be able to board Marudhar. The Tamilnadu Express does not have a halt at Agra Cant. Please consider it. Please do think about the education system. Please provide halts of the trains running between Jaipur, Ringas, Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Luharu and Rewari. The Ajmer Pushkar Medhta railway line should be completed soon. Ajmer, Kishangarh, Roopgarh, Parvatsar, Makrana line should be completed. Ajmer, Nasirabad, Kewdi, Devli, Bundi Kota line should be completed. The work of Ajmer Chhitor-Ratlam and Chhitor-Udaipur line should be taken up at the earliest. My submission is that an agitation was launched to run a train between Bikaner and Howrah. The Hon. Minister had paid a personal visit there and had assumed at Bikaner that this train would be introduced definitely. My submission is that 20 lakh people of Bikaner line in Calcutta, Bengal, Assam and Jodhpur. If half of the trains remain on this side and the rest of the half trains goes to that side, I think that the agitation going on in Bikaner would cooldown. Please think on it.

Gauge conversion work in Ajmer, Chhitorgarh and Udaipur should be expedited. I would also like to submit

[Shri Girdhari Lal Bhargava]

that the Shatabdi Express, which has been introduced has very old coaches. The passengers pay the full fare but they get good between Delhi and Jaipur. The coaches are 100 years old. All these things should be looked into. Similarly if a shuttle service is introduced between Jaipur and Ringas via Bandhikui then the milkmen and the fruit sellers who come to Jaipur and create problems in other trains would be benefited.

Vishwakarma is a big industrial area in Jaipur. Train do not stop there. It is very essential that halt is provided for the trains there. Vishwakarma is the biggest industrial area in India. The trains must have a halt there. Similarly, overnight express trains for Delhi from Hanumangarh, Shriganganagar and Sirsara Districts of Rajasthan and also from Hissar should be introduced. A shuttle service should be introduced without any delay on the broadgauge Makrana-Pakhsara branch line since the Veer Tejani fair and cattle fair is organised there.

The Bikaner-Jaipur Intercity Train 2466, 2479 must have a halt at Neekha since there are cement and chemical factories at Neekha. Likewise 15 up, 16 dn. 3 up and 4 Dn. trains must have stoppages at Chaumu Govindgarh. Kota-Jaipur train should be extended upto Indore. The three pairs of trains running between Kota and Beenapur are being controlled by Central Railway. All these three trains are local. Being local trains these take 20 hours to reach Bhopal from Kota while the bus takes 8 hours only. Therefore, I demanded that Kota Bhopal train should be converted into an Express Train...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : He is going to conclude. Let him conclude.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, a train should be introduced from Jaipur to Bhopal. I demand that Rs. 100 crores should be provided for the Agra Bandikui railway line instead of Rs. One crore, the foundation stone which was laid by Kalmadi ji. Due to consideration would be given to introduce a Rajdhani Express between Mumbai and Jaipur via Mount Abu and Ajmer. My other submission is that a train should be introduced for Haridwar. Please consider to introduce a new train between Jaipur and Bangalore. While replying the hon'ble Minister should mention about all these things.

[English]

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN (Coochbehar) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, thank you for the opportunity given to me to take part in the Railway Budget.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate through you, Sir, the hon. Railway Minister for his assurance in this august House that 56,000 casual labourers would be made permanent this year.

[Translation]

AN HON'BLE MEMBER : The Janta Dal is the largest constituent in the United Front Government. Only one member has been called so far. We should also be given an opportunity to speak.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I have got names of eight parties of the United Front and list has been prepared accordingly. I am calling one by one.

[English]

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN : Sir, I am sure that when these poor working class people are made permanent, they will bless the hon. Minister of Railways and the staff.

Regarding the point that the five per cent hike in the passenger fare and 12 per cent hike in the freight rate would hike the general price index, I would like to say that the hike will be upto three to four per cent. The essential commodities will be costlier. Even then, I would like to say that the Railway Budget in respect of fare and freight is a balanced Budget because of the fact which we all of us should know that we are living in a pro-capitalist economy. We are in the era of WTO because of the fact we are wedded to WTO. Moreover, we have opened our doors to the multinationals and if we count all these aspects, then price rise could be there. So the hike in fare and freight rates is justified in this way.

Sir, I have gone through the Budget and his speech also including the Pink Book wherein he had covered the detailed programme. But I must say that injustice has been done to West Bengal, particularly to North Bengal and the Northern end of West Bengal and Sikkim.

Sir, there is only a survey and completion of the survey report. There is no new Railway project, there is no new railway line, there is no electrification and there is no new train. He has introduced 82 new trains but not a single train from West Bengal end. I think there is no rosy picture in the Pink Book of the Railway Budget.

I very much appreciate the hon. Minister's bold speech and I quote :

"In my opinion, it will not be possible to develop rail infrastructure in this backward region as long as the financial viability of a railway line is the norm and these regions will continue to remain backward."

The hon. Minister was kind enough to mention any region as a backward area; he was kind enough to mention that the Northern part of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were backward areas; he was kind enough to mention Jammu and Kashmir as a backward area. But I am sorry to say that the hon. Minister has forgotten that the Northern part of West Bengal is also a backward area because of the fact that the six districts comprising North Bengal are 'no industry' districts. More than 50

per cent of the population is either Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe. This is the position of that area. The people have to see and not to board the trains. I think the hon. Minister knows the difficulties with which the passengers are moving in the trains. In the Awadh Assam train the genuine passengers, with valid tickets, are forced to travel on the roof, which is running between Delhi to Coochbehar. Out of those unfortunate people, 14 people died once by falling from the roof.

In North Bengal, the trains are not running. The trains are moving very slowly. It is better to say that they are walking only. Punctuality is not a word which is used in these areas. My friends from Assam will appreciate my views.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR (Dibrugarh) : We definitely support you.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN : In our college days we used to correct our watches by seeing the train. Now, you cannot say whether it is today's train or day before yesterday's train! The trains are late by 37 to 38 hours. If you go through the time-table, you will find it. I think, in this way, if trains are moving in that part of the country, the days are not far away when we will find that they are competing with the bullock carts under the able guidance of the Railway Board.

I raised this issue in this august House that there are some trains like the Brahmaputra Mail, North-East Express, Darjeeling Mail, Kamrup Express, Saraighat Express, etc. which are treated as superfast trains. Earlier, these trains were running at a speed of 55 kms per hour, but now they are running at a speed of 40 to 45 kms per hour only. So, you have no right to charge the passengers at the rate for superfast trains. The hon. Minister of Railways was kind enough to withdraw the signboard 'Superfast' from these trains. Now, there is not a single superfast train in N.F. railway zone.

The Railway authorities are thinking that in other parts of the country, the train speed should be increased from 60 to 80 kms. per hour, from 80 kms to 100 kms per hour, from 100 to 120 kms per hour and from 120 kms to 150 kms per hour. But here in this zone, the speed is going to be less and less, from 60 kms to 40 kms. Is it a sign of progress or backwardness? Is it not an injustice to that part of the country, to the North-Eastern Region and North Bengal? What has the hon. Minister done for them?

Sometime back the hon. Minister replied to one question and he said :

- (1) There is no railway line;
- (2) There is no double line facility;
- (3) To run at least two rakes daily just to send food and other essential materials to North-Eastern Region, that is, the Seven Sisters, Assam, Meghalaya and other States because it is essential.

There is no double line facility there. Of course, the present Railway Minister alone is not responsible for this, his predecessors also have been responsible. For the last forty or fifty years, that area has not been developed as it should have been. From the very beginning, they have been talking of the North-Eastern region, but how can a train go up to the North-Eastern region without bypassing North Bengal? If you go through the map of India, you will find that it is just like a peacock's neck. you cannot avoid passing through North Bengal - Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. Otherwise you will have to have an air rail. You cannot go from Delhi to the North-Eastern region without passing through North Bengal. From Calcutta to Delhi, you can avoid Bihar and U.P., from Delhi to Maharashtra, you can avoid U.P. and Madhya Pradesh, but for going to the North Eastern region, you cannot avoid North Bengal. So, along with the North-Eastern region, the development of North Bengal is also essential, but the hon. Minister has not made any mention about that.

Regarding Sikkim also, I think some correction would be necessary. The hon. Minister has mentioned that for the last fifty years there was no railway line in Sikkim. It is not correct. Up to 1950, there was a railway line from Siliguri to Teesta Bazar, the border of Sikkim, via Kalimpong. In the devastating floods of 1950, it was washed away. Of course, at that time Sikkim was not a part of India. It was only in 1973 that it became a part of India. Have you got any idea about that? But what have you provided in the Budget? Only a survey! You must at least assure this House that you will make a railway line from Siliguri to Gangtok via Kalimpong. It should be mentioned here, in this House. Of course, for all this, the present Railway Minister alone is not responsible; his predecessors also have been responsible for this because for the last 50 years, the Congress regime was there. My Congress friends should not become angry with me for my saying that they were also responsible for this because they did nothing for this part of the country.

Very often it is said that *neeti hai lekin neeyat nahin hai*. Here also I would like to say that only *neeyat* is not sufficient, only some provision is not sufficient, they must come out very forcefully for these projects which are connecting the North Bengal and the North-Eastern region.

In this connection, I would say, for the betterment of my constituency and for the betterment of the North Bengal, that at least one Shatabadi type train should be introduced for the North-Eastern region. Which train you will provide, that is different thing. What name you will give to that train, that is a different thing. But from New Coochbehar to Sealdah, a Superfast train must be introduced. It must not be just like Teesta-Torsha Express which takes a very long time to cover...(*Interruptions*). No, then it will harm the interests of the people of that region because we, the North Bengal people have to

[Shri Amar Roy Pradhan]

very often move from the end of North Bengal to Calcutta because Calcutta is the State headquarters. So, for that purpose, at least one train should be there. But it must not be just like the Teesta-Torsha Express. Teesta-Torsha is an Express train but just to cover 700 kilometres distance, it takes, according to the schedule, twenty hours. That means it is not an express train.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Calcutta South) : Sometimes it takes even forty hours!

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN : It may take forty hours or even sixty hours, that is a different thing. But even according to the schedule, it would take twenty hours. That is the position.

15.00 hrs.

Sir, the Minister may consider introducing a new train from Sealdah to Delhi. I would like to mention very clearly that it may be called the Azad Hind Express. We are celebrating the Birth Centenary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. In that connection, Kumari Mamata Banerjee and Shri Basu Deb Acharia have already raised this issue. Let this train be named as the Azad Hind Express or the Azad Hind Mail.

He has taken steps for the conversion of New Jalpaiguri-New Bongaigaon line via Siliguri and New Alipurduar metre gauge line into broad gauge. It is a conversion from metre gauge to broad gauge. It is all right. But the money that has been allotted for this is only Rs. 20 crore. According to their estimate, it requires at least an amount of Rs. 380 crore. If it requires Rs. 380 crore, I do not know how much time it will take to complete this conversion with this allotment. What will happen in the meanwhile? He will disturb the metre gauge line and also the broad gauge line. In the broad gauge line the congestion will be more. The trains will move slower and slower. They will run just like bullock carts!

The survey of the lines from New Mynanguri to Jogigopa via Changrabandha, Mathabhangha, New Coochbehar, Toofanganj, Boxighat, Golakganj and Dhubri should be completed immediately. This is my request to him. If he goes through the history of the Railways then he will find that this type of proposal is already there. This survey was done long back, when Shri B.C. Ganguli was the Chairman of the Railway Board...*(Interruptions)*. But conducting of survey only will not be sufficient. I hope that the Railway Department will take necessary and immediate action to complete this busy line. It will be helpful to so many purposes.

Sir, the hon. Minister please, a meeting was called by Assam and West Bengal people. You will be astonished to learn that on the issue of a new railway line some 60,000 to 70,000 people were gathered and the people were very much happy. The hon. Minister

also be astonished to learn that when they heard that Railway Minister had included it for survey, they were so much joyous that they organised many functions in that particular area.

Sir, I would like to draw the hon. Minister's attention regarding the issue of fare and freight which he mentioned in his speech. He may earn more money through Railways. But it is a matter of regret that an important item like tea is not being moved by railway train or by railway wagon. What is going to happen at the Assam and North Bengal end? At least 80 crore kilogrammes of tea is moving from this end to that end, Calcutta or Delhi or wherever it may be. But this is moving through road transport. They are not using the railways.

I must say one thing here. From my place, Coochbehar, at least 150 to 200 trucks loaded with tomatoes and other vegetable move to Delhi and other parts of the country. I do not know whether you are consuming those tomatoes here or not. They come from far away places. But they are coming by road. There are no facilities for rail transport.

Let us take the case of raw jute. Out of 80 lakh bales that are produced, about 50 to 60 lakh bales of raw jute are from Assam and North Bengal area. But there is no wagon facility by the Railways. He can have ample scope to earn more money for the Railways by transporting this by train. But he is not giving much importance to that part.

So, I request the hon. Minister to chalk out some programme so that he may earn more money and he may give some wagon facilities to the transport of tea, timber, jute and vegetables etc. The vegetables will reach from one end to another through train.

With these words I would like to again request the hon. Minister to introduce at least two new trains from the West Bengal and one from New Coochbehar to Sealdah and second Sealdah to Delhi Azad Hind Express.

I would also request that at least make the present broad gauge line, from New Jalpaiguri New Coochbehar New Alipurduar Bongaigaon, a double line. It is not a fresh line. These lines should be doubled immediately and some steps should be taken in this direction. When the hon. Minister of Railways will reply, at that stage, he has to assure that the double line proposal will be considered and provide some money for the purpose.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN (Trichur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to you for having give me this opportunity before exhausting all the speakers in the list before you. I congratulate the hon. Minister of Railways for bringing in the North-Eastern States, Kashmir and Uttarakhand to the railway map of India. This will strengthen our infrastructure development and it is also essential for the security of our country. I say

that this is a gift of the United Front Government to the nation on the 50th anniversary of our Independence. I also congratulate the hon. Minister for exempting the second class passengers, the season ticket holders and the platform tickets from fare hike. In this context, I request the Minister to reconsider the hike in sleeper class because sleeper class is second-class and only the name is changed. There are no sleeper coaches for second-class passengers. The sleeper class is meant for second-class passengers, the common man. When you exempt second-class passengers from hike in fee, it goes that the sleeper class must also be included in the second class as only the name is changed to 'sleeper class'. We, the Keralites are specially more interested because thousands of our workers who work in various States of India come home. When they come home, the poor workers use sleeper class. So, the hike in sleeper class should be reconsidered. That is my request.

The hike in freight charges should also be reconsidered. I do know the financial constraints of the Railways and the task the hon. Minister of Railways is confronted with. He has rightly excluded the essential commodities. But if the freight charges of other commodities are enhanced, price of all items will also go higher. Prices are already sky-high. Even if there is a hike in the freight charges for steel, cement, diesel, petrol and petroleum products, prices of other items also go up. We must find some other way to mobilise resources. So, I request, if possible, it should be reconsidered. The most burning issue before the nation and the common people now is the price hike.

That is the most burning issue faced by crores of our poor people and the middle class people. So, they cannot afford further hike in prices. They would not be able to meet both ends. So, the freight charges have to be reconsidered and we have to find some other ways to mobilise resources.

Sir, when we are faced with financial constraints, there must be some priorities on which we must concentrate. We are spending a sum of Rs. 1,800 crore for the new zones. The new zones means higher grades and creation of higher posts. I do not think decentralisation need more zones. The hon. Minister was arguing the other day that we are decentralising on all fronts. But decentralisation does not mean more zones. In my humble opinion decentralisation means you give more powers to the Divisions. There are ample Divisions now functioning. You do not try to further centralise the Divisions. Instead, you give more powers to Divisions to implement the developmental works. That is the correct way of decentralisation. Spending Rs. 1,800 crore for new zones and creating General Managers and Chief Engineers in so many number does not justify when we are facing such a financial constraint. I do not request you to stop it for all time. If necessary you may do it in good times when there is no financial constraint. If you drop these new zones

there is no need for any hike. You will get Rs. 1,800 crore under this head alone. When we extend our Railways to the North-Eastern States, Kashmir and Uttarakhnad, for that alone the General Budget has to give the needed money liberally.

15.13 hrs.

[SHRI P.C. CHACKO *in the Chair*]

This is not commercial spending. This is for the nation's security. This is for the nation's integrity. We have been talking about integrity and unity. But we have been discriminating against the vital parts of our country for the last so many years. So, we rightly deserve more allocation from the General Budget. Sir, there also I should say that if the three agencies, namely, Revenue Enforcement Directorate, Central Excise and Central Customs act coordinatedly, we will get ample money for the Exchequer.

More than Rs. 30,000 crore is pending tax arrears because the officials of the Revenue Enforcement Directorate, the Central Excise and the Customs are in collusion with the corporate sector. So, when we are in need of money, we must show the way and ask our departments to collect the arrears. The tax evaders must be pulled up. That is the way to mobilise resources and not by hiking the freight charges paving the way for hike in common man's essential items.

Sir, as far as the security of the passengers is concerned, the Minister has rightly said that he is going to convene a Chief Ministers' Conference and discuss with them. That is quite all right. But inside the railway coaches that are on the track, the responsibility for the security of the passengers solely rests upon the Railways. The Railways cannot shirk that responsibility. They have a Director General of Police in the Railway Board, and there are forces under him. When the passengers get into the compartments, they think that they are secure in the railway coaches. So, if anything happens in the railway coaches that are on the track, the responsibility lies with the Railways. So, they must make arrangements and through whatever means or methods or actions that they take, they must ensure that the passengers' lives and belongings are secure. I also request that, before convening the Chief Ministers' Conference, the Minister may please have a discussion with the Chief Minister of Bihar because there the thefts and violent attacks are taking place repeatedly.

My time is very short. So, before going to other aspects, let me say a few words about my own State, Kerala. When I deal with my State's issues, I request the hon. Minister and this august House to excuse my harsh words. Kerala has been cruelly discriminated.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : Fortunately, there is no such crime in Kerala, and there is a Left Front Government in Kerala. Do you want to say that the responsibility for the passengers'

[Shri V.V. Raghavan]

safety within the trains should lie with the RPF and not the CRPF? As far as I know, passengers' safety inside the trains is a subject of the CRPF. Are you telling us that the Railways, that is, RPF should take that responsibility? Please clarify this because I am very much concerned about that.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : I include all the forces, that is, CRPF, RPF and the local police. My point here is that you must provide sufficient protection in the compartments. That is your duty. As far as the compartments are concerned, it is up to the DGP, who is sitting in the Railway Board here, to protect the passengers. That is my point. You can work out the details. Unless you do that, what is the security for the passengers?

What is the use of the DGP sitting in the Railway Board? Why is he there?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Raghavan, the Minister is asking for your suggestion. So, if you can make your suggestion, it is good.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : My suggestion and my request is that the Railways should take the primary responsibility of the protection of railway passengers inside the coach also. That is my suggestion. Whatever arrangement he has to do for that must be done. That is my point.

Coming to the discrimination meted out to the State of Kerala, I would like to say that 30 million people are there in Kerala. What crime have we committed for such a cruel discrimination? The one crime that we do here is that all the 20 Members of Lok Sabha who hail from Kerala and who belong to the various parties solidly support the United Front Government. We are civilised people. We put forward things in a very civilised manner.

Last time, the hon. Minister convened a meeting. We were there. He had promised some things. But nothing has been fulfilled so far. I am sorry to say this. The Chairman is a witness to that. Mr. Minister, you promised one new train. Thousands of passengers who want to go home from Delhi, Mumbai etc. wait for months and months for getting reservation.

When you said that the Konkan Railway would be commissioned in December or March 1997, some of us doubted it. You squarely said that it would be commissioned and through that, sufficient trains would be diverted and, if necessary, new trains would be introduced. What is the fate of the Konkan Railway now? You have asked the foreign experts to come in order to find out how the tunnel could be built. As far as my knowledge goes, no foreign expert could tell you how to built a tunnel with the present alignment. Why did you change the alignment. Therefore, the Konkan Railway to Kerala becomes a most difficult task to achieve. Let the experts come. We will hear what they

have to say. So, we cannot wait until the Konkan Railway is commissioned. Please fulfil the promise that you made last year. In the Rail Bhavan, we all gathered there but the promise has not been fulfilled till this day.

The State of Kerala is punished. The passenger trains are lodged on the track for hours together because of the single line. The doubling of Shoranur-Mangalore line, Kollam-Trivandrum line has been promised. But we have to wait till the 21st century to get the doubling of the line is done. Why is it like this? Why is this discrimination meted out to Kerala? What is the problem in completing the doubling of the line as soon as possible, as promised before? Now, the Railway Board says that we have to wait till 1999. It is a simple work. There is no obstacle anywhere in respect of anything. If you provide sufficient funds, this doubling can be done within one year. That was a promise. Now, it is not carried out.

Mr. Minister, you have promised a new line. It is very good. It is in respect of the Angamali-Sabarimala line. The amount provided for a new line is just Rs. one lakh.

It is adding insult to injury. I again ask him: What crime have we committed for this insult?

As far as providing amenities to Kerala is concerned, I have got a reply from the Railway Board saying that there is a double platform in Pudukad. I invite the hon. Minister to visit the place to see what this double platform is! Pudukad is a most important station. It is an industrial and cultural centre. But there is only one single platform. The other platform is just full of grass. It cannot be called a platform. This most vital industrial centre of Trichur district Pudukad has no double platform even in 1997. They may say that there is a platform. I request him to come and see the sight of the platform. The Chairman knows about it and he has been crying for this for a long time, yet it has not been fulfilled.

I wanted to cite some examples. As far as amenities are concerned, he should visit sometimes railway stations in Kerala. Once when I was rushing to answer the nature's call at the First Class AC Waiting Room in Ernakulam city, the person sitting with a table there asked me to give him twenty-five paise for entering the urinal. I mentioned this to the hon. Railway Minister three weeks ago. A man who is rushing to answer to the nature's call, he is stopped and asked to pay money for that! By that time what happens is, he has to urinate, change his underwear and come back! This happened in Ernakulam city, the corporation city. Can you cite such an example anywhere in India? Amenities in Kerala are completely neglected. The General Manager of Southern Railway, Shri Agnihotri — I am sorry to say that I have taken his name - does not reply to my letter. Last week, there was a parcel building completed. He came there, inaugurated it and went back. He did not bother to inform me, the local MP.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (Muvattupuzha) : We all have objection to that.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : That is why, the Railway people are ignoring the development works. They are controlling everything from Chennai. By centralising it, he cannot do justice to Kerala. If he gives Palakkad and Trivandrum Divisions sufficient powers and fund, then things will go in the right way. Looking after of the entire things of Kerala by a man sitting in Chinnai will not work. It is not working. I am compelled to say these things due to heart-burning. We had told him all these things last year also and he had also given a promise on that.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Sir, other Members from Kerala will also speak about it, I know.

[*Translation*]

I want to inform the Hon'ble member through this house that all members had met us and three-four points made by him, first point is about train, I have given assurance to all Hon'ble members that we are going to introduce a train up Delhi via Cochin. Thus I said before all Hon'ble members which also covers the route from Cochin Ernakulam to Delhi. We were under the impression that if Cochin railway project is completed, it will reduce the time by twelve hours and the above train will not be required. But as the Hon'ble member is apprehensive that the Konkan railway is not likely to be completed in time. But I think it will be completed by June. But when the Hon'ble member says about this and I said the other day also that we are ready to introduce a Cochin-Ernakulam train.

He has asked to introduce a train from Mangalore to Shorenur. I say it repeatedly that we are short of funds and one to that reason only Rs. 17 crore had been provided. But as I said the other day also shortage of funds will not be allowed to come in the way. I raised it from Rs. 17 crore to Rs. 50 crore. Therefore, to say repeatedly that it is being neglected, will not be proper. We have raised the amount three fold...(*Interruptions*) There is no need of clapping. Likewise Rs. 12 crore were allocated for Trivandram to Quilon. This has been also raised to 15 crore as per the wishes of the members. Coming to Angamali to Sabarimathia, the only way we had was to make it from Annamalai to Sabrimalia and Kottayam to Sabrimalia. We also had talks with Thomas Saheb and Chief Minister Saheb.

They said that :

[*English*]

It will be better, if you construct it from Angamalai to Sabarimalai.

[*Translation*]

We have linked Sabarimalai to Angamalai in the new budget, the members say that only Rs. one lakh has been provided for that. Shri Nirmal Kanti Chatterjee

Saheb is sitting here. Until the budget is passed we cannot spend even a single paise out of it but the budget be passed. Whether the budget be of one rupee or a lakh rupees is passed, it will be with us, it can be raised as much as you require. That's why to say that...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Financial mismanagement also takes place...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Nitish ji, we have also this much of wisdom what financial mismanagement is...(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please do not disturb, Let the Minister Complete.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Our other colleagues were demanding that it should be from Annamalai to Sabarimalai. But from Kottayam to Sabrimalai is also equally important. Last time one of our colleagues had said about Shornoor. I am telling this because it will take 6-7 hours if give a detailed reply of each state. I am trying to associate myself with the anguish of the Hon'ble member. He blames that we are doing injustice. There is the case Ernakulam railway station. He should accompany us, gate will be constructed, everything from beautification improvement will be undertaken. Ernakulam is a very nice place. We are also concerned about that. There are three to four demands. Last time it was said about Shornoor. Railway Board was not ready. But we say that after completion of railway lines, we would do it there again. This is their main demand.

[*English*]

The Railway Ministry is very much concerned with your problems. I am also equally concerned. I say even today that I had shortage of funds.

[*Translation*]

As the funds are generated, we will raise the amount under this head for that you should thank the Railway Minister and Railway Ministry.

[*English*]

At least you must congratulate the Railway Ministry and the Railway Minister.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : The Minister has given the reply. You can put the Budget to the vote of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Some very important points are made and the Minister is clarifying them. Please understand that. It is very important.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum) : He is providing the reply State by State, so that at that time he does not take much time.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please do not have this kind of interventions. The Minister has made some

[Shri V.v. Raghavan]

clarifications. It is very useful. Some points are made and clarifications are given. It is good.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : The Railway Minister has taken so much care...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Such interventions are good for our discussion. Please appreciate that. It is a good intervention.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : I must remind the hon. Railway Minister that for all these on-going works the Budget has provided only Rs. 34 crore whereas Rs. 500 crore are necessary. How are you going to implement these things with Rs. 34 crore? When we met him, he pleaded financial constraint. That is why we are very much serious and anxious. With these Rs. 34 crore nothing can be done there unless he makes more allocation for Kerala.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Minister has now announced that it is not Rs. 34 crore. So, you can appreciate that and you can thank him for that. It is substantially increased now.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : I am sorry, the Minister is with us. He himself is so much with us. But the Railway Board is not with us.

MR. CHAIRMAN : When the Minister is with you, there is no problem.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : That is not the job of the Railway Board. The Minister is responsible for this House and not the Railway Board or its Chairman.

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : I know that. I was also a Minister for some time in the State. But the promise that was made by you last year has not been fulfilled. It was sabotaged somewhere and I can say this to the hon. Minister.

In these financial constraints what is the necessity for the creation of higher grade posts? So many posts of General Manager have been created. I know how officers come for their betterment, for creation of more jobs. I see a hand of the Railway Board in creating so many higher posts at this financially constrained stage. They are sabotaging your good intentions right from the level of General Manager up to the level of Chairman of the Railway Board. They are sabotaging your good intentions. They can flatter. They are very clever in flattering. They know how to sabotage things.

With a painful heart I would say that we, the thirty million people of Kerala, are severely hurt. As one man, from the agricultural workers to the members of the Chamber of Commerce, from peons to the lecturers in the colleges, the entire thirty million people are agitated. You should think of that. Everyone of these thirty million people of Kerala are protesting against the cruel discrimination. That is the truth. That truth cannot be ignored by giving an explanation.

Sir, I say that we never take to arms. We never say a word of separatism. That is our patriotism, our nationalism and our civilization. But that is the main reason for this cruel discrimination. Please do something. Explanations, promises do not get us anywhere. We want something to be implemented.

*[Translation]*

SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS (Kalahandi) : Mr. Chairman, Sir each block of our country needs development today. Parliamentary Railway is such a case that each backward area wants to link it with Railways. So, whenever there is a debate on railway budget, a large number of Hon'ble members is present every time to speak because railway facility is necessary for the development of their respective areas. They want that they should also participate in the discussion on the railway budget. We have to face a lot of difficulties for it despite having resources in our country. Renewal is also to be undertaken to strengthen the old lines and doubling work also has been carried out and laying of new rail lines in new areas is required and new trains are also to be introduced alongwith that. If you give a close look to this system, as a whole you will find it hard to bring about immediately all the improvements you may wish to make.

Sir, whose ever be the Railway Minister, given the capacity and resources available, with us. However, I would like to say that keeping in view the condition of the country the public demand and honouring the sentiments of Members, the budget presented by the Hon'ble Minister is commendable and it is very good budget. No body can present the best budget because no single person could do it. No body could perform better in the Railway Department, from its infrastructural unit to upto Railway Board and nobody can do a better job if he, does not get the proper cooperation of the people of the areas. Whenever trains are running.

Sir, many question were raised in the discussion on the Railway budget, which I do not want to repeat. I would like to mention only some points. The accidents which take place under the railway, are due to the mistakes for the railway staff. The action which should be taken against them is not taken. So, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister towards this that the accidents which occurred due to the mistakes committed by the railway staff, should be carefully looked into and action should be taken thereon. Everybody expressed his own opinion in this House that many dacoities take place in trains. Some dacoities were committed recently. The train which starts from my constituency reaches Delhi passing through voltair and Madhya Pradesh, it is Samta Express on which also a dacoity was committed. On that route, why and how this chain of dacoities is being witnessed. We all are aware of the law and order situation prevailing there. The Hon.

Minister of Railway or bureaucrats sitting in the Rail Bhawan are aware the co-operation of R.P.F. is available or not and what is its constitution. The R.P.F. men are not answerable to the Ministry of Railways. So either the R.P.F. should be allowed to be taken over by the Ministry of Railways or R.P.F. should be allowed to take over all the works starting from tacking care of the station to the running of trains. Otherwise, the Government would fail to provide safety and security to people and their belongings.

Sir, the situation has become so terrible today that people feel themselves insecure while travelling in the trains. It puts hurdles before the social programme of the exchange or strengthening of the social feeling and feelings of national unity. People wishing to go from one place to another, are unable to do so and are cancelling their tour programmes since they feel themselves insecure in journey by trains. This must be checked. The rules should be enacted to stop this tendency. R.P.F. should be fully empowered like CRPF in order to make it strong.

The Government has provided facilities to Eldermen also Senior citizens of the country have been provided facilities in since the Senior citizens are main ill, they should be provided facilities in first class and second class. They have to travel here and thus for treatment, therefore the said facility should be extended. I would like to thank Shri Ram Vilas Paswan for the development of backward and hilly areas of the country like the North East region and Uttar-Khand. Our State Minister for Railways hails from Uttara-Khand, I would like to thank him for the construction of rail line for the development of Uttrakhand and Jammu and Kashmir and for bringing the latter to the main streams of the country. The development of the railways has been much discussed in the House. Panigrahi ji and our sister Sushila Tiriya put forward many points here. Mayurbhan, Kyonzhar, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Fulbani and Koraput districts of Orissa are very backward. They are talked about in the whole world. There are various figures pointing to this. The Minual deposit here are second to none. It can be developed through rail line but it had been neglected in the part. I would like to inform him that the provision made for Dentari-Banspari, Rupsa-Bangarposi, Khorda road-Balangir, Lanjigarh-Rupsi-Junagarh rail lines in Orissa, is so meagre that it is not possible to complete the construction of these rail lines within the target set. The Government had promised for the extention of Campalpur, Hawrah and Koraput lines. These were some technical problems which have now been solved. I would like to thank the hon.' Minister for providing A.C. and pantry Car in the Samata Express. The Samata Express is meant for the passengers of the border areas of Andhra Pradesh and the backward areas of Orissa but this train runs only days in a week, it should be run daily. It was named Samata so that it may treat every one with the feeling of equality. After Several requests in the last session the hon'ble Minister provided

Rs. crore for the rail line from Lanjigarh Road to Junagarh after a great deal of persuasion during the last session. but the work could not commence them. Unfortunately, there is not even single staff. All staff has been called and put on duty here. Last time, I had asked about it but nothing happened.

When the hon. Minister was to visit our constituency some people went to meet him. I had taken up within him the issue of the development of that station last time also. The work was started there but it has been discontinued now. Just now hon'ble Member from was stating how the things are manipulated at lower level. It would be better if the hon. Minister keeps this in mind. I had told about this line in the previous session also. Shri Chandra Shekharji and Shri Narasimha Rao ji had requested the hon. Minister of Railways that people did not get job in backward areas due to non-availability of rail line there. At least least 2 lakh people have fled Bolangir and are wandering in Delhi and elsewhere in search of work. If besides providing them money, rail line is also made available for them, they can be saved from starvation and the development of the area can also take place Lest the hopes of Dalits and the youth of the country are shattered due to non-inclusion of this rail-line in the list of new lines to be constructed. If this hope is not fulfilled, it would put a big question mark on the Dalit Leadership. It is good that he has tried his best by dint of his experience to satisfy all and sundry. If he could not execute the same during has tenure in the interest of public, it can be said, that we have made so much progress as compared to that period. If it did not happen, the faith which he is extending today to those country would be stalered. This will endanger them or Dalits will suffer a lot in the days to come. Therefore, I would request to keep it in mind. If he has made provision of certain amount whether it Rs. one lakh of just Re. one that work should be completed with, in five or ten years and under timebound programme and its progress should be mentioned and reasons ascertained for any defaults its implementation. Mr. Chairman, I would like to cite an example from my own constituency, Sir a rail-line is to be constructed in my Parliamentary-constituency but not even one k.m. line could be laid during the last six years. Had I been the minister the work would have been over. Since he is working for the entire country. I hope, he would pay attention to it. That faith should not be allowed to be shaken supporting the balanced Budget, I hope that keeping in mind the feelings of people and the discussion which took place in the House. He would not raise the question of shortage of resources. I hope, he would explain these points while replying to the debate and he would complete the talk of developing the pains he has taken for the backward areas of the country would be taken to their logical conclusion. With these words, I support the Rail-Budget and thank the hon. Minister of Railways.

[English]

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I stand here to support the Railway Budget.

The hon. Railway Minister has recognised the continuous neglect of the North-Eastern Region. Many of the hon. Members in this House have expressed their concern about the condition of the Railways in the North-Eastern Region. They have also expressed their happiness, since the hon. Railway Minister this time has tried to rectify some of the very long-standing demands of the North-Eastern Region.

Many of the hon. Members in this august House are not posted with the information that the Railway in my region was started in 1882. I come from Dibrugarh; and the first train was flagged off in 1882 from Dibrugarh to Sadiya. But till today, the broad gauge line has not reached that station. I am very grateful to the hon. Railway Minister because this time, the broad gauge line will touch that station which is supposed to be the third oldest railway station in the country.

I am also thankful to the hon. Railway Minister for having provided Rs. 300 crore for the development of railway infrastructure in the North-Eastern Region. Without railway infrastructure, that region cannot think of development and that is the reason why the North-Eastern Region is not developing.

There is only one important National Highway which is NH 37; and that is also getting disrupted by floods three or four times every year. Almost all the things go to the North-Eastern region only through the Railways and I am thankful to the hon. Railway Minister for taking personal interest to expedite railway gauge conversion in the North-Eastern region. In this Budget, he had promised to complete the Dimapur to Dibrugarh line and the Tinsukhia to Lekhapani line. It is expected to be completed in the next month. I very much appreciate the effort of the Railway Minister.

After the completion of the broad gauge lines, he had promised that he would be giving Rajdhani Express to Dibrugarh at least for one day in a week. He has indicated in his Budget about gauge conversion of lines between Mariani-Furkating and Simalguri-Moranhat. He has given the main thrust for the development of the railway network in the backward areas.

I must congratulate the Railway Minister that in this year's Budget, he has given Rs. 100 crore for railway expansion in Jammu and Kashmir. I want to draw the attention of the Railway Minister to consider Himachal Pradesh also which is one of the very important States from the point of view of tourists.

Sir, there are always complaints about shortage of wagons and coaches in our Indian Railways. So, in this Budget, the Railway Minister had provided money for the procurement of 26,000 wagons, 2000 coaches and 300 locomotives for the railway system in 1997-98 and

this is one of the bold steps. I congratulate the Railway Minister for this.

I know that without resource mobilisation, Railways cannot take up the development work and for that, he has to definitely increase the fare somewhere. This time, he has increased the freight rate of the Railways by 12 per cent and I must thank him that he has excluded 15 items. As you know, I have already stated that things from others parts of the country go to the North-Eastern region only by Railways. Last July, the Railways Minister has increased the freight rate of ten per cent and in this Budget by 12 per cent. And again, in the General Budget, there is transportation tax of five per cent. I think that will make the things very costly for the North-Eastern region because almost 90 per cent of the building materials like steel and cement and other consumer items go to that region by Railways as we do not have any industrial unit to produce all these things. So, I think, the consumer items especially the building materials will be a little more costlier for the people of the North-Eastern region. I think the Government has to look into this so that the people of that region will get some relief.

Many hon. Members of this House discussed about safety of passengers and safe railway journey in the Indian Railways. The Railway Minister has personally taken some steps to streamline the system and to see that passengers will enjoy a safe and comfortable rail journey. But I want to draw the attention of the Railway Minister towards the causes. He has very kindly supplied one book on safety where he has indicated that the cause of accidents was mainly due to the failure of railway staff. Sir, I would like to quote some figures in this regard. In 1993-94, out of 520 accidents, 358 were due to the failure of railway staff. In 1994-95, the failure of railway staff had caused 351 accidents out of 501 and in 1995-96, accidents caused due to failure of railway staff were 237 out of 398 accidents.

16.00 hrs.

At the same time, the failure of equipment also takes place. I want to draw the sharp attention of the hon. Minister of Railways to see whether that could be improved upon by giving special training to those employees who are engaged in looking after the safety of the Railways because the human cause and the failure of the equipment are also the major reasons for rail accidents in our country.

I want to request the hon. Minister of Railways to minimise the accidents in the Railways. For an efficient and safe railway journey, I think, he has to improve the telecommunication and signalling system in our country. Though we are having one of the largest networks in the world, yet we are having the oldest type of signalling system. We are having three types of signalling systems in our country.

In the telecommunications also, I think, the hon. Minister of Railways has to take some more interest. I know that there are difficulties about funds. But, I think, we cannot compromise in the case of safety and safe journey of the passengers just because there is scarcity of funds. I think, it must get top priority.

I do not want to elaborate about dacoities and other things. I had mentioned it last time also. When you travel from Delhi to the North-Eastern Region, you will find that a lot of smugglers enter into the trains in Siliguri and Jalpaiguri. They open their *bazaar* inside the running trains. You will get Chinese made and other foreign goods in the trains. I think, the security staff and the railway staff should take a note of it. Those who have travelled in that region have seen foreign goods being openly sold inside the trains in that sector. I think, that is one of the dangerous zones for sabotage.

Recently, we had a very traumatic accident near Kokrajhar. I think, if we do not stop such type of things, it may create more problems in the coming days in those areas.

We will find that the people from the North-Eastern Region, specially from the hills, are very little in Railway. Their presence in the Central sector is very nominal. If we see the faces of the railway employees, we will hardly find any employee from the North-Eastern Region, specially from the hills. My special request to the hon. Minister is that he should take some special steps so that the people from the North-Eastern Region - both from the hills and the plains - get job opportunities in the Indian Railways. That will definitely give a sense of participation. That will also create a sense of national integration. The Railways is the biggest employer of our country. If the people from the North-Eastern Region are not properly represented in employment, I think, that will create a lot of heartburning discontentment among the people of that region.

I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Railways to another thing. There are vast tracts of railway land in the metropolitan cities, in small towns and even in the rural areas. A very large segment of that land has been illegally encroached upon by many people.

16.04 hrs.

[PROF. RITA VERMA *in the Chair*]

That is going to create more problems for its future expansion. I would request the hon. Minister of Railways to constitute a committee to see how best such land could be utilised commercially for the benefit and development of the Indian Railways.

I have already stated that the Railways were started in our part of the country way back in 1882. So, with the gauge conversion, the railway stations and the passenger amenities should also be improved.

My colleagues from the North-Eastern region will agree that the conditions of coaches, especially the passenger coaches, are very bad. People in our region say that when other Railways reject a particular coach, it is being sent to the Northeast Frontier Railway. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Railway Minister to this fact and request him to rectify the situation, by providing new coaches.

Though the hon. Minister has taken a lot of interest in the development of the North-Eastern region, on my behalf and on behalf of some of my colleagues I would like to request the hon. Minister to consider extension of B.G. line from Fakiragram to Dhubri in Assam. For the last seven or eight years this has been the consistent demand of the people of Assam. We had approached both the Railway Minister and the Prime Minister with this demand. I request the hon. Minister to kindly look into that demand.

There is another demand for a line from Pancharatna to Silchar along Assam-Meghalaya border for which a survey was also done long back. But the work has not started on this line.

I have already mentioned about the foot bridge on Dilli river. This is the only bridge there and it is being used by more than 100 villages. It will hardly require an expenditure of about Rs. 15-20 lakh. I had already drawn the attention of the hon. Minister towards it and to put it on record I am again raising it here. I hope that the Railway Minister will consider this demand sympathetically.

It is our common belief that the railways was established in Assam to serve the colonial masters. You will be surprised to see the railway map of Assam. All the railway lines go far beyond the district headquarters. It is almost in the border of tea gardens or a nearby colliery. There is no connecting train. This is one of the long pending demands of the people of Assam, that is they should be connected with the main district headquarters.

You have already started work on B.G. line from Moranhat to Simulguri. If another 40 Km. route from Moranhat to Dibrugarh is added, it will connect Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Simulguri and Moraini. This will shorten the route to about 100 Kms. If you have to come from Moryan to Dibrugarh it is about 150 Km. route now. If you go from Simulguri to Dibrugarh via Moranhat it will hardly be a 90 Km. route. So, this will connect Sibsagar and Dibrugarh. I would definitely request the hon. Railway Minister to at least include this 40 Km. new route for which a survey should also be done this year.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : From where to where?

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR (Dibrugarh) : It is from Moranhat to Dibrugarh. Myself and Shri Chaliha had already requested you for this new line.

[Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar]

In the North Bank there is a train from Rongiya to Murkak Selek. It is approximately a 400 Km. route. There used to be three trains on this route earlier but now there is only one train. It covers 400 kms. of the plains and tribal areas of Arunachal Pradesh. I think immediate steps should be taken to restore the number of trains which used to be there earlier and also see that they run regularly and timely.

There is another important demand to improve the railway station at Kokrajhar, because that is the headquarters of Bodo Autonomous Council. This should also be looked into.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : What did you suggest about Kokrajhar?

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : The Kokrajhar station is in a pitiable condition. It has now been turned into headquarter of Bodo Autonomous Council. There are no passenger amenities. The entire area is tribal dominate.

[English]

You may kindly look into that demand also.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Ghatowarji, does the waiting room of Kokrajhar fall under the control of G.R.P.? When an accident took place there I had visited the place, there was also a station like this. I had also visited Kokrajhar. I would like to request all the Members of Parliament from North-East to list the works and the locations thereof. I shall discuss this matter with all of you separately.

[English]

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : I am really very much grateful to the hon. Railway Minister for taking the hon. Prime Minister to lay the foundation-stone of the dream bridge of Bogibeel. The Prime Minister has promised that the work would start in April, 97.

My request in this regard is that the Engineering Division of the bridge should be situated at Dibrugarh under Tinsukia Division. But it should not be on the other side because that place comes under Alipurduar a Division which is 400 km. away and outside of Assam. There is a long-standing resentment in the minds of the people of Assam that the benefit of any developmental work in the area goes outside the State. So, the Engineering and the Construction Divisions must be brought under the Tinsukia Division. From Dibrugarh you can reach the bridgehead by extending the railway line by only five kilometres. From the other side, it is more than 40 kilometres. A well-developed infrastructure is also available in the Dibrugarh area.

In this year's Budget the Minister has provided for the upgradation of the workshop from metre gauge to broad gauge. I request the hon. Minister to look into this matter of having constructed a Division at Dibrugarh.

I wish to inform the august House that Dibrugarh being the third oldest railway station in the Country and as Dibrugarh town is celebrating the 150th year of its existence, I request the hon. Railway Minister to declare the Dibrugarh railway station as a model station with all the passenger facilities and amenities to cater to the needs of the people.

The RITES have already made a survey in connection with the realignment of the Railway and the goods stations in Dibrugarh. They held discussions with the public of Dibrugarh. I would definitely request the hon. Railway Minister to look into the report of the RITES...*(Interruptions)* and no office should be shifted from Dibrugarh, this is my demand.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Ghatowar, you have spoken for 20 minutes.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : I will take another two minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN : It is already 20 minutes now.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR : I will just conclude with the remarks of the hon. Railway Minister. I am very happy to note his remarks. I want to repeat the quote of his Budget speech.

'Even after 50 years of Independence, be it the North-Eastern region of Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh or Sikkim, Railways have not reached these States. Similarly, Kashmir also does not have any railway line. The region of Bihar adjoining Nepal and *Uttarakhand* are also backward as far as railway network is concerned. In my opinion, it will not be possible to develop the rail infrastructure in these backward regions as long as the financial viability of a railway line is the norm, these regions will continue to remain backward'.

Not only from the point of view of the Railways but also from the point of view of national integration, I think that the statement of the Railway Minister is very bold. I want everybody to welcome his statement. I would request the hon. Prime Minister to take note of this statement and provide the financial support to the hon. Railway Minister to fulfil his commitments.

At the end, I would like to draw the attention to the continuous neglect of the SC and ST people in the Central sector. I got the opportunity to serve in the Parliamentary Committee for the welfare of SCs and STs. I am constrained to say that in every Central sector, they always create problems for the SC and ST

candidates. I hope that the hon. Railway Minister would take appropriate steps in this direction. There is also an accumulated neglect of the S.C. and S.T. people in the Railways. Definitely, the hon. Railway Minister is not responsible for this. I have full faith in him. He will definitely rectify the deprivation of the S.C. and S.T. people.

I would like to just cite one figure. The representation of the S.C. and S.T. people in senior posts in the Railway Board is very small. Out of 466 people, the number of general category people is 334 and only 38 people are from the S.T. and S.T. category.

I am sure the hon. Railway Minister will uphold the protection provided by the Indian Constitution for the S.C. and S.T. people. I have full faith in him. I am very happy to support this Budget.

[Translation]

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL (Jamnagar) : Madam, Chairperson I would like to thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on Railway Budget 1997-98. The hon. Minister of Railways might have received congratulations for presenting Railway Budget. He has said that the fares have been increased nominally. He had provided relief for backward and poor section but by increasing 5 percent for in sleeper coach, Railway would get Rs. 84 crore. 10 percent for increase in A.C. Coach brings Rs. 112 crore while by increasing 12 percent freight charges, Railway gets Rs. 1592 crore. What relief has been provided by the Minister of Railway to the country even after imposing a tax to the tune of Rs. 788 crores? Do the poor people of the country not bear the burden of freight charges?

Sir, we are going to celebrate the golden jubilee of our independence. We talk of Gandhian philosophy.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let me remind all the speakers that they should conclude this speech within 10 minutes. So, please put forth your view point, keeping this thing in mind.

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL : You have started interrupting in the very beginning. I am on my legs to speak for the first time in 11th Lok Sabha.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have taken a lenient view.

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL : You should have provided me 20 minutes instead of 10 minutes because, I have got an opportunity to speak for the first time.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have increased the time from 5 minutes to ten minutes. Now, please conclude within ten minutes.

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL : We talk of Gandhian philosophy. Gandhiji was our ideal and our inspiration. He was instrumental in getting up freedom. Every party talks of Gandhiji. I have been writing again and again to the hon. Minister of Railways that we are going to

celebrate golden jubilee of our independence and therefore, please introduce a train named Gandhi Express. Mahatma Gandhi was born at Porbandar. Therefore, a train should be introduced from Porbandar to Delhi and it should be named as Mahatma Gandhi Express. But the hon. Minister replied that no train is named after an individual. Trains have been introduced in the name of Sabarmati or Ashram which were ideals of Gandhi ji. I would like to ask whether Mahatma Gandhi was an ordinary person? He was not an ordinary person but he was a legend. He was not limited to a state but he was a national here. Therefore, I wholeheartedly demand that a train named Mahatma Express should be introduced from Porbandar to Delhi.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) : If you are allergic to the name Gandhi, now it as Mahatma.

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL : Alright, name it Mahatma. Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out of train in Africa and he had to face great humiliation. We will be able to till the would that we have a train in India in the name of a person whom they had thrown out of the train. But I am not sure whether my suggestion would find favour with the hon. Minister. Keeping in view the time limit, I will have to cut short my speech. There is single track from Ahmedabad to Okha in Gujarat. Not even survey has been conducted for double track. In Jamnagar, the production of Soda is to the tune of 12 lakh tonne, cement 24 lakh tonne, fertiliser-8 lakh tonne, Salt 50 lakh tonne, agricultural produce 15 lakh tonne. Thus, total production is to the tune of 1 crore and 59 lakh tonne. Reliance, S.R.J.C. and Megha industries have invested about Rs. 25000 crore in construction. Even then, the survey of doubling the track has not been undertaken so far. A great injustice has been done to Gujarat. The population of Saurashtra region is one and half crore. But the conversion of metre gauge to broad gauge in Bhavnagar, Tarapur, Banesar, Kapadvaj, Samarkhyali and Palanpur has not been done so far. Rs. 43 crore had been provided in 1996-97 for Bhuj and Gandhidham but the said work also could not be started so far. The hon. Minister of Railways visited Rajkot-Veraval and undertaken opening and Rs. 10 crore were provided for the purpose. The work can be completed. He is saying that he has set target of transporting 43 crore tonne and 3 percent increase in passenger transportation. This target is alright but the problem of pilferage is there. Transporting charge is more than the cost besides pilferage. The enterprisers bringing goods claim for pilferage and the Railway has to repay for the claims. To minimise pilferage ... (Interruptions) measures should be taken.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have already taken eight minutes.

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL : Mr. Chairman, please be liberal and give some more time.

[Shri Chandresh Patel]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please keep the time limit in view, otherwise other members would not get opportunity to speak.

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL : This is my maiden speech. There is no check on those who are indisciplined, whereas those who are disciplined are not given the opportunity to speak.

SHRI KALPNATH RAI (Ghosi) : This is his maiden speech. Kindly allow him to speak.

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL : Now, I would like to speak about terminal and pitline. The Headquarter of Western Railways should be located in Bhuj in Gujarat. 80 percent of the railway line of western Railways is in Gujarat but head quarters of western Railways is not located in Ahmedabad. We need new trains for Varansi, Thirunantapuram, Jamnagar, Porbandar and Delhi. But our demands for there have not been fulfilled so far.

Now, I want to point out how the bureaucrats take pleasure in creating difficulties. Hapa is a railway station. Drinking water is required there. Our municipality is prepared to provide mature but laying of pipe lines requires sanction which has not yet been given. People are agitating there. This is one of the instance of bureaucracy handling the matter.

Secondly, the pit line had broken. I had raised a question in this regard as to who was responsible for that and what action was proposed to be taken. It was stated in the reply that inquiry is being conducted and after completing of the inquiry responsibility would be fixed and action would be taken. I again raised the question in this regard in the next session as to what action has been taken by the Government in that regard. It was stated in the reply that no pit line has been broken and the question in regard to taking action does not arise.

With the increase of population of Jamnagar, the city requires a by-pass the State Government has constructed 14 kms long by-pass. A provision to construct an overbridge was later on. It was decided to construct this bridge with the assistance of both the Union Government and the Government of Gujarat, the estimated cost was Rs. 42 lack six-seven years back and the Governmetn of Gujarat had deposited Rs. 17 lack but the work has not stated as yet. The Executive Engineer of the State Government had written a latter to the railways one year ago and in reply to that letter they had asked to send second SOR. Then the Central Government provide its share. The railway department has to spend the funds of the Government of Gujarat. But they even donot spend these funds and today that amount has escalated three times.

I would conclude my speech after submitting one or two points more.

There is a road which falls within the railway premises. The responsibility of constructing this road is neither of Municipality nor of State Government nor of Union Government and the Railway is also not bothered to constructs it. Complaints have been made in this regard that this road is not being constructed. Madam, your bell is irritating me...*(Interruptions)* I am sorry, I should not have said so. I should not have said so far the chair. I should have said Madam Chairperson. Please pardon me.

I would conclude my speech by submitting one more point. There is an old railway station and old railway track in Jamnagar. This track has been connect into broad gauge from metre gauge, but broad gauge line has been laid at some other place. The old line is lying idle. There is lot of encroachments there. The Railways should look into this. So far as the question of road is concerned, road have been constructed on 80 percent line and it has been named Indira road and demand is only for 20 percent. We have negotiated for it, written letters, the Municipal Committee and the State Governments have also written letters in this regard, but the work has not been taken up. The Municipal Committee wants to construct it. If this road is constructed, the total people would benefit a lot. The Minister is not asking for more money, he is asking for only 20 percent money. When a letter was written in this regard one month earlier, it was stated that the concerned officer should be contacted when that officer was contacted, he said that negotiations are under way. There is Military Navy, Army and also Air Force in Jamnagar and all of them would be benefited. Jamnagar is a big city now. Only 20 percent is required for constructing the road which is within the premises of the department of railways. These are difficulties. We request the Minister of State for Railways that at least 10-20 percent of our problems should be solved so that the people there may be benefited.

Sir, I wanted to raise a lot of points, but there is paucity of time. I thank you for giving me time for speaking.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : Sir, the hon'ble Member should contact our Ministry in regard to the road mentioned here, we would provide full assistance in this regard.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I request all the hon'ble members to be brief in their speech, as many hon'ble members are still to speak.

[English]

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA (Guwahati) : Madam Chairperson, I thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to take part in the Railway Budget for 1997-98.

Well, through you, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister of Railways. He is just at the moment not present but I convey the message through Shri Satpal Maharaj, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways. I also congratulate the Minister of Railways for presenting a most pragmatic Budget for the first time in the history of the Railways in the Parliament. It is a most pragmatic Budget for various reasons. I am going to elaborate those reasons within a few minutes.

We all know that the Railway is a common mode of transport both for passenger and also for goods traffic. The Railway is to provide the route to social mobility - social mobility in respect of economy and social mobility in respect of understanding the various communities living in different parts of the country. Probably it is also a route to political mobility. Therefore, I think that the Railway has a great role to play in the diverse cultural field and in the diverse heritage of the different parts of the country.

To do so, if the Railway is to provide the mobility, probably we have to make a survey. I am to lament that even now a scientific survey for introducing the railheads in different parts of the country has not yet been made. This is simply because even now there are parts in the country where the people have not even seen railway tracks and the major reason for not putting the railheads into such territories is said to be non-viability. The concept of non-viability so far as railheads are concerned is retrograde. This is a most backward and negative attitude. Therefore, I urge upon the Minister of Railways that during his tenure, a broad based survey should be made. This should be a survey of those territories where there are trains and of those territories where there is no train. The differences between the haves and the have-nots must be pointed out clearly so as to assuage the grievances of the people living in different parts of the country. A map, at the time of discussion on the Railway Budget for the next time, should be definitely hung over the seat of the hon. Speaker or the Chairperson so that all the Members of Parliament could see which part of the country is lagging behind and for what reasons. The economy of the country must not stand in the way of introducing trains in those areas.

Now after making this preliminary observation on this very important sector, I would like to pass on to the Budget. I have already said that I have taken a stand to support the Budget. I was listening to many of the Parliamentarians who have taken part in the debate and they have expressed some reservations regarding the hike in the railway fares.

But the impact of the increased railway fares has been only 0.12 per cent. Therefore, 0.12 per cent hike in the fares and freights probably may not have a serious impact. But then there is a possibility that inflation may take place and it can not be ruled out. So, to contain the inflation of 6.1 per cent, as it is now, all measures should be taken and the money that will be collected

from the hike of prices should be ploughed back to remove the impediments, to increase more railway facilities and to create new lines in the different territories.

A number of complaints have been made about the customers' services. I also feel that the customers' services are very essential. They are not very satisfactory. I shall request the hon. Minister to plough back the money that will be accrued through the hike of the prices into these customers' services because, at present, the position is not very satisfactory, particularly the trains moving in the North-Eastern Frontier States. So, the Ministry of Railways should make an endeavour to improve the conditions.

The Budgetary target of freight earning has declined in 1996-97. It has declined to the tune of Rs. 325 crore. So, in 1997-98, an all out effort should be made to see that the budgetary target should not decline. If it is not achieved then a disaster may take place in the very dream of improvement of the railway facilities and the new projects that have been contemplated may suffer from certain difficulties. So, the estimates should not go wrong to invite disaster.

The demands from some core sectors are poor, particularly cement, coal, steel, etc... (*Interruptions*) Madam, I should be given some time because some of my friends have been given more time.

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is a long list pending. So many of your colleagues want to speak.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Kindly give me half-an-hour. That will be enough for me.

MR. CHAIRMAN : It is too much.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : I need a minimum of three hours. But then it will be too much. I request you to give me at least half-an-hour more.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Sharma, please try to complete your speech within three minutes.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Madam, kindly give me some time.

In the Railway Budget, there has been a mention of a lot of economy and this economy has been at the cost of reduction of staff and also due to management efficiency. But I would request the hon. Minister that the economy should not be at the cost of employment. The Railway is treated as a social welfare organisation and if it is a social welfare organisation, then it must provide employment opportunities. I also request them to see that the Railway becomes one of the most important employment-oriented institutions.

We have seen that sometimes awards have been given to non-efficient persons. In the Railway Department, efficiency must be complimentary to proficiency and it must be matched with the performance. So, giving of awards for efficiency must always be followed.

[Dr. Prabin Chandra Sarma]

An inefficient person should not be given an award.

The operational ratio has been very bad. I desire that the operational ratio in the next Budget be improved.

Now I come to my own sector.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude now.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Madam, I am not taking much time. I should be given some more time.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have already taken ten minutes. Please conclude now.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : I shall take only a few minutes more.

Now I come to the facilities being given. In this House, there has been rather an applaud and we also applaud the Railway Minister that some projects have been given to the North-Eastern region. But the picture is not that rosy. The Bogibil bridge is now proposed. Rs. 15 crore is the estimated expenditure. But the tenure for completion of the bridge will be about ten years. I request the hon. Railway Minister that this Bogibil bridge be constructed in about five years' time so as to make a positive impact on the people of the North-Eastern region.

Jogigopa-Pancharatna line has not been completed. I desire that this bridge and the railway line from Jogigopa to Guwahati be completed during this year, that is, 1997.

I desire that the gauge conversion from Metre Gauge to Broad Gauge from Lumding to Silchar be completed within about two years. I also desire that the Kumarghat-Agartala railway line should be completed within 3-4 years.

Along with this, I also desire that-

- doubling of the line be done up to Guwahati;
- Guwahati railway station be improved to make it the heart of the North-Eastern region;
- all district headquarters be connected with railway line, as has been requested by Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar;
- the frequency of the Rajdhani Express be increased to at least six days a week;
- direct trains be introduced thrice a week for Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore;
- the speed of the Express trains to Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai and Cochin be increased.
- train-buses be introduced between Guwahati and Nalbari, and Bongaigaon and Dhubri.

Gauge conversion of M.G. line to B.G. line from Rangia to Murkong Chelak and from Kamakshya to Pandu Store Depot may also be completed ...*(Interruptions)*

I also demand the construction of rail-road bridges in the city of Guwahati, introduction of a circular railway surrounding Guwahati and reintroduction of the M.G. line between Silghat to Chaparmukh and from Chaparmukh to Moirabari. For reasons not within the knowledge of the people, these railway lines had been stopped. In the presence of the hon. Prime Minister, the Railway Minister had made a statement in Silchar that these two new lines would be introduced. I request the Railway Minister to introduce these two lines.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Thank you.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Madam, I have not been given sufficient time to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have already spoken for fourteen minutes. If everybody speaks for fifteen minutes, many others will not get any time at all.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Madam, normally I have a habit to end my speech with a Sanskrit verse. I shall take only one or two minutes more.

MR. CHAIRMAN : No, you conclude now. Otherwise I shall call the next speaker.

DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Madam, you are very kind. You are so kind that you will give me another one minute at least.

*[Translation]*

Mera Bharat Mahan, hence with a Sanskrit Shloka I conclude my speech :

Purnam idam, purnam idah, Purnay Purnam udishyate,

Purnasya purnamodayoh Purnamev Avshishyate.

*[English]*

*Bharatvarsh* is a *mahan desh*. It has got its capacity and it has got its immense resources.

If we all come together, if we put our heads together, probably everything that we - all the Members from different parts of the country irrespective of the Parties that we belong to - our desires may be achieved. I think the Railways can then be a real route to social mobility.

With these few words, Madam, I conclude and I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

16.45 hrs.

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Eleventh Report

*[English]*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Ram Naik to present the B.A.C. report.