

14.09 hrs.

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at nine minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

[English]

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

THE RAILWAY BUDGET — GENERAL
DISCUSSION — 1997-98

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS ON ACCOUNT
(RAILWAYS) — 1997-98

DEMANDS FOR EXCESS GRANTS —
RAILWAYS — 1994-95

DEMANDS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY GRANTS —
RAILWAYS — 1996-97 - *Contd.*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Shri Sriballav Panigrahi.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh) : Sir, the growth of the Railways should be commensurate with the increase in the quantum of traffic and also the New Economic Policy. I was also referring to the fact that only five per cent growth has been projected in respect of goods traffic.

This year, this will be 410 million tonnes. As per some study made, in another ten years or so the growth of goods traffic will be of the order of 2000 to 2500 million tonnes. So, to keep pace with such needs of the country which are rising very fast, as the economy takes off, the Railways need reforms.

I do not know, what is the progress achieved. There was a proposal regarding some tourist trains to be run by private parties. I do not know what is the fate of that proposal. If it is successful, we can further increase running of trains in that sector. I have a few suggestions as to how funds can be mobilised to meet the increasing needs of the Railways.

The Budgetary support, which has registered an increase from 16 per cent to 21 per cent, should further be raised in the years to come. We understand that in the Approach Paper for the Ninth Plan there is a provision of about Rs. 8 lakh crore for public sector. Out of this amount, Rs. 3.5 lakh crore will be by way of Budgetary support. This is a good thing. I think Railways is number one public sector enterprise in our country having many unique features. I need not dwell on it because of time constraint, as also I do not want to repeat it here. Keeping in view the requirements of the Railways, adequate Budgetary support should be provided to it in the Ninth Plan.

Secondly, internal resource generation has to be improved further. The present position is very disappointing. Steps will have to be taken either by the Ministry or the Board to improve the performance of the

Railways. We have a work force of about 16 lakh people. Even the Economic Survey says that there is further scope for improvement of the productivity of the railway workers. At the same time, economy has to be observed. To minimize the expenditure, a large number of steps will have to be taken in this direction. Today, the working cost ratio is 91 per cent which is one of the highest in the world. Rake rate is one of the highest or the highest. Only seven months ago this was 85 per cent. It has now risen to 91 per cent. So, we have to improve the performance of the Railways. We have to bring down the working cost also.

Thirdly, there are two schemes under which work is being carried out in Railways - Build, Own, Lease, Transfer scheme (popularly known as BOLT), and the Own Your Wagon scheme. These schemes have achieved very limited success. The success that was expected from the working of these schemes at the time of floating them is nowhere to be seen. What are the loopholes? Ofcourse, from Own Your Wagon scheme we have been able to get about Rs. 576 crore. But the whole thing should be reviewed. Avenues of financial assistance from the World Bank should be explored. It has to be seen as to how further funds can be obtained by way of loan from different financial institutions.

In this connection, we cannot rule out the participation of private parties, industrialists, etc., in the functioning of Railways. But we have to be very selective. We have to very cautiously identify the areas which can be operated by the industrialists, MNCs, etc. so that the dominance of Railways and the importance of Railways is not undermined and at the same time, the huge financial support that is needed is also met to some extent from these sources. Regarding privatisation and all other things, we have to take national consensus. We have to take different political parties into confidence.

In the case of General Budget, we understand that there is an element of secrecy and confidentiality. But what is there in the Railway Budget to keep it confidential? Even if fares and freight are increased, it is not going to come into effect from the next day. Nobody purchases tickets in advance for black-marketing. That way two to three months before the presentation of the Railway Budget, the process of consultation with different political parties, with trade organisations and with labour unions can be very well done.

On another point I have a very concrete suggestion to give and that is regarding the utilisation of surplus land which was dealt by Shri Pramod Mahajan also. Railways have enough surplus land in different towns and cities along the railway track and at other places. After making a careful study of the requirement of resources, the surplus land could be estimated which would fetch huge amounts to the Railways. Added to that, there is another resource Railways can make use of. This may look somewhat awkward but this can also be a practical suggestion. It is about the utilisation of sky space over the tracks inside the metropolitan cities.

[Shri Sriballav Panigrahi]

For this resource, sky is the limit. There is no limit to it. We have space available from eight or ten feet above the railway track. If utilisation of this space is properly planned and pursued, it will earn thousands and thousands of crores of rupees as revenue to the Railways. There were some who were toying with this idea but I do not know if this has moved any further. This idea should also be explored.

According to the recommendation of the National Transport Policy Committee, the requirement for railways multiplies. The needs multiply and the Railways cannot meet the requirement in transport sector. Short-distance traffic, both passenger and goods, should be left to the road sector because short-distance trains are running on losses.

Railway is making losses in the short distance sector. It could be handed over to the road sector. Railways should handle the long distance sector more diligently and efficiently. This is my other suggestion ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Panigrahi, you have already taken 55 minutes. Please conclude your speech within five minutes.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : I am concluding.

The largest work force in our public sector in there in the Railways. In public sector there should be total transparency and the same has been promised in the Railway Budget Speech, so also in the Budget Speech. Transparency is not possible unless we ensure effective, meaningful and active participation of the workers in the management. Steps should be expeditiously taken to see that labour is associated, workers are associated with the management. I think that will naturally contribute to the increase of efficiency in the functioning of the Railways.

Before I go over to the demands of Orissa in a few minutes, I would like to request the hon. Minister that in view of the overall economic situation, it is time to reconsider 12 per cent increase in freight. The freight hike should be brought down. As I have explained earlier, it does have a cascading effect on the economy. What was the percentage six or seven months back? Common people cannot bear the burden of the freight hike of 12 per cent. It would have an adverse impact in the different sectors of our economy. That way, the Railways will do well to reconsider this and bring down the hike in the freight rate.

As regards the safety, security and the passenger amenities, the less said the better. Today also, there was a news of another robbery in Howrah-bound train near Patna. Naturally there was some uproar in the House during the Zero Hour. What is there in Patna, in Bihar? We have been seeing the situation of law and order in Patna. Regular and constant robberies, violent

incidents are taking place in the running trains and that too in and around Patna, the capital city of Bihar. What is this? It is disheartening, rather alarming.

There was a study that about 11000 Railway Policy Personnel (GRP) were required to operate in Bihar alone in 1977. Do you know the present position? It is 2500. What will happen with this number of police personnel there?

[Translation]

"SKANDHAM NA BADHTE RATAN, TAB BADHTI BADHTE."

[English]

This was the conversation between Vikramaditya and Kalidas in those days.

The Minister of Railways is expressing helplessness everywhere, inside the House, in Patna, and in Bhopal. He says that he has no control over the State Government. The GRP is under the State Government. Who is to sort out this? Of course, he says that the Prime Minister will take a meeting...*(Interruptions)* After saying all these things, this has again increased. This is the position of law and order in Patna.

Regarding financial discipline, les said the better. Everybody knows about the observations made by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Everybody knows about the observations made by the Chief Minister on the floor of the Assembly. So, there are financial irregularities. There is no rule of law. The Administration is not being run in accordance with the provisions of the Constitutions...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI (Darbhanga) : The discussion is going on railways and not on the Government of Bihar...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You will get a chance to speak. Please speak at that time.

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : It is connected with the Railways. It is very much relevant...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please let him conclude.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Hon. Members please sit down. Let him conclude.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : is there any State in India, where the Union Government looks after the administration...*(Interruptions)* If such an

incident takes place, we also come to know
...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : He is concluding. Let him conclude.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : Truth is truth.

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : You must stick to the Railway Budget.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : This is part of the Railway Budget. If you do not understand it, what can I do?...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : He is concluding.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : Safety, security and punctuality should be the main concern of the Railways. Now, the passengers do not feel safe or secured. In spite of the presence of GRP, looting and dacoities are taking place. There is some defect in the law. That should be sorted out. That is what I wanted to say.

The State, the Centre and all the other agencies connected with Railways are there to serve the common people. Safety, and security of the passengers is, and should be the main concern of the State Governments, the Central Government, the RPF and also the GPF. Any discrimination in this regard is meaningless to the common man. Therefore, we should sort it out.

Now, I am coming to Orissa. I will conclude in just two or three minutes. No speech on Railway Budget is complete without focussing the demands of my own State or my own area. That is why, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I seek your indulgence for two or three minutes and I will conclude.

Orissa, as I said, is the home of natural resources. It has abundant natural resources. But the paradox is that it is still suffering from abject poverty. In terms of railway-lines, the position of Orissa is much less than the national average. In terms of route kilometres. Orissa is far below the national average. In terms of per capita income again the position of Orissa is below the national average. But in terms of natural resources, it is one of the top States of the country. So, neglect of Orissa amounts to neglect of national economy. Tribal people are also there.

Kalahandi and Bolangir are often discussed here. So, you see the miserable conditions of the people there. A survey for two lines was done for Talcher-Bimbalgarh which was found positive. Bargarh-Raipur and Gunupur-Raygada lines are to be surveyed. In the Railway Budget, a promise has been made for completion of Sambalpur-Talcher line. But from our experience, we have reasons to doubt this announcement which was made on the floor of the

House. It is because, several times we have seen that in spite of the assurances given on the floor of the House, those assurances were never reflected in practice. More funds for Khurda-Bolangir line is needed. Bolangir, and Kalahandi are the severest drought-prone areas. Junagarh and Lanjigarh are in Kalahandi district. Sir, if more money is provided, that would also go a long way in giving a much needed relief to the people there.

That will supplement the relief operation, if work is started. Rs. 2 crore or Rs. 3 crore were provided in the last year's Budget but nothing has happened in the field so far. No work is done there, no office has been opened there. Therefore, Sir, give more money and see that it is really spent there and that the work starts on the ground.

Rupsa-Bangriposi is another line in Mayurbhanj tribal dominated area which needs gauge conversion. There also the same problem is there as in the case of Khurda Balangir and Junagarh-Lanjigarh line. This gauge conversion should be there. Jagpura-Bansparni line, as I said, should be treated as a national line because it will significantly contribute to the economic growth of the nation as a whole.

Talcher-Sukinda line had been surveyed but no work has started there as yet. In terms of ratio, that is the expenditure and the benefits that will come out of it, it is highest in the country. This deserves to be given top most priority. It is also before the Planning Commission now. Doubling of Talcher-Paradeep line, Jharsiguda-Titlagarh line and Khurda and Puri Line, need to be expedited.

Electrification is going at a snail's speed between Balasore to Bhubaneswar and Bhubaneswar to Waltair. This has to be looked into. Frequency of Rajdhani Express to Orissa should be increased. This has been, of course, promised by the Minister of Railways when a delegation of MPs from Orissa met him. The hon. Minister made certain promises. I am constrained to observe that in the last year's Budget Speech, it found expression and while inaugurating the new zonal office, the Prime Minister also made certain declarations there but even the Prime Minister's announcements are not given effect to. They are not being implemented. This is the plight of this country.

Frequency of Sambalpur-Nizamuddin Express should be increased and two new trains between Rourkela and Raipur via Sambalpur and another DMU between Berahmpore, another divisional headquarters and Bhubaneswar should be introduced. There should be a direct train to Berhampore from the *Rajdhani*, that is, from Delhi. Extension of the bi-weekly Cochin-Chhatisgarh Superfast to Jharsiguda was earlier promised by the ex-Railway Board Chairman, Mr. Bhatnagar when I happened to see him. But it is yet to see the light of the day.

[Shri Sriballav Panigrahi]

I would now touch upon the conditions of the platforms and passenger amenities in Orissa, particularly, in western parts of Orissa. Their condition is awful. It is miserable. Out of 7,000 stations, in about 6,000 stations in our country there is no improvement in the amenities being provided to the passengers since Independence. In western Orissa these are all profit making railway stations. These include Rajganjpur, Rourkela, Jharsiguda, Belpahar, Bajrajnagar and Talcher from where revenue worth crores of rupees is earned from coal and other sectors. But you cannot find drinking water there. Even raw water is supplied at Jharsiguda station.

I would also request the hon. Minister to sanction fly-over at Bhadrak, Belpalar, Chainpal, Chowkipuda at Jharsiguda. There are so many other things but I am not going in detail. I would request the hon. Minister of State for Railways to please take a note of these.

Of course, what the hon. Minister of State would say? He has his own grievances. The Minister of State is not given any powers. But whatever it is, Railways is like a Government within a Government. It has its own autonomy. That is why, we have a separate Budget for Railways. It had its dominance earlier but now that dominance has dwindled down. So Railways dominance should be ensured.

The Railways should be brought on the rail. The functioning of the Railways has been derailed. It has to be brought back on the tracks so that there is a healthy functioning of the Railways. We want that Railways prosper because no other transport can replace the Railways.

Sir, I am constrained to observe that the Railway Budget falls short of all the requirements. It does not have a vision. It does not have a proper direction. That is why, I said that it is not imaginative and it is not inspiring. Therefore, looking at the future and looking at the dominance that it should also have over the economy of the country and keeping all our targets - targeted growth and other things - in mind, I gave different suggestions as to how to improve it and how to mop up funds, etc. And that is the way for making it totally transparent, taking the people into confidence, the political parties into confidence, their workers into confidence and enlisting their meaningful participation.

I wish the Railways to prosper. Let the Railways also rise from their deep slumber, be realistic; it should not go only by taking populist decisions because sometimes it is necessary to take hard decisions also. And this way a congenial climate can be built, we can see that the Railways flourish and the Railways also go along on our cherished lines.

With these words, I conclude my speech.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, whatever has been said by the hon. Member has been noted down by me...*(Interruptions)* I have no grievances on what he is saying...*(Interruptions)* We would make all efforts to implement his suggestions...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : We observe the functioning and only then we speak...*(Interruptions)* You should give more work.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Now I call upon Shri Nawal Kishore Rai to speak.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Calcutta South) : Sir, the Minister of Railways is not present in the House. The Railway Budget is an important Budget. Why is he not present here?...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : The Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways is present here...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : The Minister of State for the Ministry of Railways is all right. He cannot do anything. Why is the Minister of Railways not present here?...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The hon. Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways is present here.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : The Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways is present here but he is not doing anything. The Minister of Railways should be present in this House and he has to listen to the grievances of all the Members...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : We will inform the senior Minister.

(Interruptions)

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer) : Bihar has already been given enough...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI (Sitamarhi) : I am telling...*(Interruptions)* I have all the data...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ : We are sitting here to serve you...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : We want the Minister of Railways to be present here. We do not have any grievance with the Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways. But why is the Minister of Railways not present here?...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : A message will be sent to the hon. Minister of Railways.

Now, please allow Shri Rai to speak.

[Translation]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Had you been on this side, you would also have spoken like this...*(Interruptions)*. Is it an important budget or not...*(Interruptions)* He is helpless, he will not be able to do anything...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : He is not helpless...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : We are sending the message to the hon. Railway Minister.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not correct to say that the State Minister can not do anything while sitting here...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Why do you prolong this discussion?

(Interruptions)

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : The Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways is noting down the points. Everything is going on record...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I have already told you.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : He has to listen to our submissions since it is an important budget...*(Interruptions)* Our grievances are not with him...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The senior Minister has come.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : This is not the Government of the Congress party. It is the United Front Government...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Had it been the Congress Government the Minister would have been present here...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ : It is a matter of joint responsibility...*(Interruptions)* I am sitting in place of the hon. Minister...*(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I had gone out with your permission...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : That is what I was saying.

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : The committee of Ministers had a meeting. Mamata Banerjee herself had been the Minister. The meeting of the committee of Research was going on and the subject was power. I had gone out with the permission of the Chair...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Mr. Minister no one was aware of it...*(Interruptions)* Can't we say anything...*(Interruptions)* Is there any objection in speaking...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Now that the hon. Minister of Railways has come, this matter should end here.

Now, please allow Shri Nawal Kishore Rai to speak.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the Railway Budget for the year 1997-98.

Many hon. Members have expressed their views. The Railway Budget under discussion is definitely a balanced Railway Budget to remove the regional imbalance. It is the 50th year of freedom, the golden jubilee year of freedom. The decisions taken by the hon. Railway Minister in this year of golden jubilee are praiseworthy and welcome. I would like to welcome him on behalf of my party and myself.

I would like to submit that we had given a patient hearing to the views expressed by the hon. Members. After freedom in 1947, for 50 years the development of railway has been neglected in Jammu and Kashmir, North Eastern states, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland in the remote Northern parts of Bihar, Tripura and in the deserts of Rajasthan. I was also a Member of the last Lok Sabha and we have been continuously raising questions about the problems related to every nook and corner. We held discussion on the Railway Budget also and the then Prime Minister had given assurance but these areas which have been neglected for 50 years could not get justice. Therefore, we would like to call this budget a balanced budget for social justice. Hon. Ram Vilas Paswan ji has proved himself as the best Railway Minister in giving dynamism to the budget as he has improved upon his performance of the last year justice to the areas, which have been neglected for 50 years.

He has got development in the seven states of North east. We have been receiving dozens of telegrams and hundreds of letters in the organisation from our colleagues as congratulations. The hon. Railway Minister of the United Front Shri Ram Vilas Paswan ji has visited each and every state of the North East and he had been to Kashmir also to remove the imbalance, on which none of the previous Governments of the last 50 years have paid attention. On account of it a lot of

[Shri Nawal Kishore Rai]

problems cropped up there. The solution to these problems was the development of Railways, which the hon. Railway Minister has done in this Railway Budget.

While speaking on his railway budget he clearly said that besides being a professional organisation the railways has to be a welfare organisation and it has to play a role for providing amenities to the neglected ones by taking up social welfare measures. The Hon. Minister has stated as to how the rail budget was presented in a short time and the circumstances under which it was presented.

The increase in the freight charges has been made keeping in view the villagers, poor farmers and common passengers. Ninety percent of the one crore ten lakh daily rail passengers travelling in ordinance class are villagers and small business men. People in cities, also travels trains from one place to another. Season ticket holders are also there. All are low income people. Under adverse conditions when the budget support is low, the inflation is rising and there is resources crunch the hon. Minister of railway took a historical step by not increasing the fares of ordinary class.

He has touched the hearts of villagers and poor people. There is no increase in the fare of season ticket a marginal increase has been made a sleepers and A.C. class. He has tried to understand the difficulties of common man in villages. In fact Railway Minister has proved to be a true sympathisers of villages as the saying goes. Village saying - "the wearer knows where the shoe pinches." One who rises from the lower strata of society and from poor village life understands the agony of villages. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, you have also come from the lower level. Due to this background the Railway Minister, the who symbolises of social justice has considered the needs of common man. As such it is a balanced budget of common people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you, I want to say that the hon. Railway Minister is committed to making railway a public welfare institution. An all out effort has been made to fulfil that commitment. I welcome this. I would like to say something about the position of railways in 1950-51 vis-a-vis 1995-96. In 1950-51 there was 53000 k.m. rail line in the country. After fifty years i.e. in 1995-96 it increase to 62000 k.m.s. Railway lines have ben laid in every nook and corner of the country. Whether it is hilly area, the North-Eastern states, the Northern area of Bihar, areas Himachal Pradesh or Kashmir. More work has been done on professional lines in the railways. This time the hon'ble Railway Minister has taken decision with full will power and every effort has been made to remove the imbalance in respected of people who have been deprived of railway facilities in the country. I would like to furnish data regarding the increase of rail line in fifty years. In 1990-91, 300 k.m. lines was spread. In 1991-92 it was

reduced to 242 km. In 1992-93, 319 km., 1993-94, -204 km., 1994-95, -145 km., 1995-96 -137 km. The target has again been reduced in 1996-97. After that this year he has promised in the house of develop the railway as a public welfare institution and the figure has increased to 139 km. in this budget, we welcome that this required to be increased further. The neglected areas must be covered by the public welfare institution. Certainly its development must take place in neglected areas.

Hon'ble members have discussed many things. Before you. I welcome this budget and want to make some suggestions. Efficiency of the railways must be increased. Hon'ble Minister has paid attention to this aspect in this budget and in the last year's budget also. Computerisation has been increased. I had also requested earlier and again request that more transparency should be budget in by expanding computerisation.

The work relating to increase in efficiency which was pending for the years and for which many committees of railway had given reports that the number of zones should be increased. Now decentralization of work has been done by adding 5 more zones. I welcomed it.

I would like to suggest that transparency should be ensured in the railways by increasing decentralisation. It will speed up work, ensure transparency and improve the condition of Railways. Alongwith it I would like to request that the railway lines in backward areas which have either been declared uneconomical should be made economical so that those areas could also develop. With the development of those areas our country will become stronger. Besides the Railways should make its industrial and financial institutions more self reliant so that it might become strong. As a result thereof the country will also become strong.

The Railways have vast tracts of surplus land. I agree to the suggestion of the hon'ble Members that the hon'ble Minister should make a detailed assessment of it. A committee should be set up to recommend measures to make commercial use of railway land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you, I want to congratulate the hon'ble Minister that after his assuming office, the process of recruitment has speeded up. The process of filling up the vacancies in the Railways has been speeded up. We welcome if the Railway Minister has taken action to fill up the backlog of reservations in respect of SCs, STs and OBCs under the special recruitment drive. At the time the Hon. Minister gives his reply, we would like to know as to far he has been successful and how far the vacant posts have been filled up. This is the question before us today. It is expected that the backlog of reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs in the Railways would be filled up during the current financial year itself under the stewardship of the hon. Minister of Railways.

The number of zones have been increased to zones. There are 15 zones and without the number of divisions in the Railways would go upto 50. In this time of social justice none of the posts of D.R.M. and G.M. has an SC or ST incumbent. We are celebrating the Golden Jubilee year of independence. We want to discuss the problem threadbare was to how none of the posts of DRM and GM has an SC or ST incamsent. Through you, I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether persons from these categories having necessary qualifications, will get justice during his tennure? Whatever markings or entries are made in the service Books are made with a bias the SC and ST officers are deliberately denied opportunities. I would like to read from the 13th instant edition of Kuber Times. It has been written in it "Padonnati ko lekar Paswan aur Raw mei thani." Such news are coming daily in newspapers. The hon. Minister intends to do it, he has a will to do it and he will do it boldly. He wants to take action far ensuring that no untoward entries are made in the service books of qualified officers belonging to SCs and STs categories and they get justice. Not a single SC and ST person is working on higher posts or on policy making posts. These things have come to light because he wants to do this work. We want to request that the difficulty in reaching the SC and ST officers on that post should be removed by making comprehensive changes in the procedure. I want to put this question to the hon. Minister. I hope that he would take some revolutionary steps in this regard would work for justice to them.

Similarly, I welcome the decision taken in regard to regularising the daily wage workers and the provision made in the Railway budget. I urge upon the hon. Minister to like other steps required to be taken for daily wage workers and regularise the Daily wage workers. Alongwith it, action should be taken for regularising of those workers on priority basis who have worked for a year six months or two months and now sitting idle. If those steps are taken in this direction, poor people who are connected with Railways would be benefitted.

14.57 hrs.

[SHRI CHITTA BASU *in the Chair*]

I would like to make a suggestion for increasing the efficiency. The present practice of transfers in railways from one zone to another must continue. Such transfers after three years will definitely increase efficiency. Just now, hon. Member, Shri Panigrahi was expressing his views on Railway Budget. Whenever any member gets an opportunity, he never fails to discuss the increase in the incidents of crimes in Railways also definitely associate myself with the concern of the hon'ble members and share it. Some permanent solution should be found not for it. But whenever any incident occur in railways, it is politicised. I want to say that they must

see the facts before politicising it. When hon'ble Member Panigrihi was making his speech, we had mentioned something about Bihar. He exaggerate the point in respect of Bihiar. Crimes are committed in Railways all over the country, but he is concerned about Bihar only. When hon'ble Pramod Mahajan was speaking. We heard the same thing. I rise to oppose it. There is a newspaper 'Nav Bharat Times' and 'Bhasa' is its news agency. I would like to place its report in the House. it says - Maharashtra has the highest number of crimes in railways and last year Maharashtra had the highest number of incidents of heinous crime i.e. 1920. Thereafter comes Uttar Pradesh with 1843 incidents of crime. There were 665 incidents of crime in West Bengal. According to official sources Bihar figures fourth in the list. 584 henious crimes took place in Bihar. Similarly, the figures of other states have also been given in it. Therefore, I would like to clarify that keeping these facts in view Bihar should be talked about. It is true that Janata Dal is in power in Bihar.

15.00 hrs.

The Minister of Railways is also from Bihar. I express my apprehensions, because people don't discuss on these figures...(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL (Erandol) : Fifty per cent of the passengers are there in Maharashtra. Out of 110 lakh passengers moving around the country, 55 lakh are there in Maharashtra.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : You have rightly said. Sir, I have mentioned this figure to you and I want to say that during the last one week, two four incidents occurred in trains in Bihar. The responsibility for law and order lies with the states. I would like to express my apprehension regarding the discussions held here. Every day two to four incidents in a week have occurred regularly in a planned way in Bihar. I have an apprehension that there is a vile politics involved somewhere in it. The Railway Minister hails from to Bihar where the Janata Dal is in power. The Hon'ble Minister's Party is in power there. Through this apprehension, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that enquiry should be conducted into this. Whether such efforts are being made to gain political advantage. We have read in the Newspapers and I would like to thank the Minister that he has taken a decision to convene a meeting of all the Chief Ministers of the country and some concrete solution would be found out after considering it seriously keeping in view the anguish expressed by the House and sufferings undergone by the passengers. I would also request the House to give a clear opinion and suggestion to the Minister on these points to arrive at a concrete decision so that the law and order system which at present is solely in the hands of the state may undergo some

[Shri Nawal Kishore Rai]

changes and the Railway Protection Force may come to have some more powers to deal with such incidents and happenings.

Mr. Chairman, through you, I would like to request that when ever any Member starts discussion, definitely he would mention that much has been done for Bihar in this railway budget. Now, when I stood to speak some hon'ble members told me just to convey my thanks. Much has been done for Bihar. This is 50th year and Golden Jubilee year of Independence. The Minister has taken a decision to run trains in the year. Through the House, I praise and welcome this decision of the Minister. Along with this, I would also like to say that discussions have been held repeatedly in this House regarding the favour bestowed on the one hand and neglect meted out on the other leading to more regional imbalances in the matters of laying doubling and electrification of railway lines during the last fifty years of independence in North Bihar, North east state Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, desert land Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh but these areas did not get justice. I would like to tell you that when Late Lalit Babu was a Minister in Bihar he had conducted survey in a big way. He had laid foundation stone of only one scheme Darbhanga-Samastipur broad gauge railway line on 2nd October, 1975 but it could not be completed since 1975 till 1994-95 and no work has been done. In this way those 18 districts of North Bihar have been neglected and no justice has ever been done. Whenever any member expressed his anguish over this, he used to get a mere assurance in this regard. I would like to congratulate the Minister for doing justice by allocation some amount for a scheme or two for places where doubling and electrification has not been done for even a single kilometers and not even 1 kilometer new railway line has been laid for the last as many as 20 years. The Minister has allocated amount for construction of new railway line, Sitamarhi and Muzaffarnagar which touches my area. Some people are feeling jealous and they are worried when the Minister has allocated some among for a broadgauge line or two.

Sir, I want to make an appeal to the House that the North East states such as North Bihar, Kashmir region, Hilly region, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan have been neglected for the last 50 years. The hon'ble Minister has taken a fine step and presented a balanced budget, last time as well as this time for taking care of the neglected and the deprived areas and regions and also taken a decision to undertake work in this regard. For this he deserves around praise, appreciation and cooperation all over the country. We would like to request the Government also to increase the budgetary support, for his commitment to develop the railways into vocational organisation besides being a welfare

institution and for his decisions taken for neglected areas and the Government should increase the budgetary to Railways and the Minister should get around cooperation so that the process can be continued.

Mr. Chairman, I will conclude my speech in a short time. I will putforth some suggestions regarding my state and then I will conclude my speech. I welcome and thank the hon'ble Minister for taking care of Bihar in the last and the current budgets. Sir, you should also congratulate the Minister for whatever he has done for the neglected regions and you should also support us and ask him to complete if anything has been left out or if any shortcoming is there.

The Minister has decided and promised to construct railway bridge on Ganga in Bihar. It should be completed at the earliest. Then only the pace of development in Bihar will get accelerated. Whatever schemes have been formulated, should be implemented. When the Minister has visited Bihar, he had given an assurance to provide funds connecting Sitamarhi, Sonversha, Bhitamoh, Madhubani. We should also think over it. The Minister had also given assurance for conducting survey from Sitamarhi to Motihaari via Shivhari. Mr. Chairman, through you, I would like to remind the Minister that a demand for an overbridge on eastern Gumti of Sitamarhi is already lying pending. The State Government has also written about it. The people have to wait for hours at the railway crossing in Hajipur where G.M. office is situated and further there is one more railway crossing where also an overbridge is required. Particularly Muzaffarpur and Sitamarhi has come under this budget and funds have already been provided to Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga. Action may be taken for completing that also.

SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV (Godda) : Nothing is being done in Dumka in South Bihar at present. Do take up this. It is also a part of Bihar.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : I have not completed my speech. Hon'ble Yadav ji has raised a question regarding Dumka in South Bihar, I support it...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please keep the time limit in mind while speaking.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Bharat wagon in Bihar comes under the Ministry of Industry. Bharat wagon has been manufacturing wagons for the railways. Now it is in a bad shape. It is not getting orders for railway wagons. Through you, I would like to request the Minister to place adequate orders of wagons with Bharat wagon so that the concerned industry's position could be strengthened. Similarly, the Prime Minister had visited Kishanganj.

I would like to remind hon'ble Minister that hon'ble Prime Minister had assured to provide new railways

line from Arariya to Galgaliya. Perhaps money has been paid in survey. I have drawn his attention towards it also. No work has been undertaken around Bihar for the last fifty years. Today if one or two schemes of that area is undertaken, it becomes a subject of discussion again and again. Overdue works of last fifty years that is since independence are going to be taken up now. We are going to pay our attention towards that poor and backward state. The number of travelling common people in this state is more as compared to other states on the basis of population. Justice should be done to them.

In the last budget the hon'ble Railway Minister had introduced in our area a new train, Gandak Express which starts from Darbhanga and terminates at Gorakhpur. In this budget it has been extended upto Jainagar. We welcome this step but it does not provide a link either from Jainagar to Gorakhpur or for coming to Delhi. While replying the hon'ble Minister will do well to consider it. This train should be extended upto Nizammuddin via Jainagar, Darbhanga and Gorakhpur so that the poor and common people of remote rural areas lying on the border with Nepal can reach Delhi and other parts of country. With this request I once again support this budget whole heartedly. I have already mentioned about Galgaliya. Welcoming the budget, I conclude my speech.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, when the present Railway Minister, in the month of July, presented his first Budget and when there was a discussion on that Budget, we made a number of suggestions in regard to improvement in the efficiency of railway operations because Railways have been an important infrastructure in our country.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Basu Deb Acharia, please do not think that I am disturbing you. I just want to say that your Party has got 29 minutes and there are many Members of your Party among others who want to speak.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, I always speak for one hour.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I cannot disown the arithmetics. You can please start now. I am only saying that this arithmetic is there.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : But we do not find that the suggestions which were made by us on the floor of the House, last time, and accepted by the Minister of Railways have been implemented. Only one positive thing that we have seen is an increase in the budgetary support. In the Standing Committee on Railways, what we thought was that unless there is an increase in the budgetary support, there cannot be any expansion of railway network. The railway network has to be taken to

all the areas in our country, particularly to the inaccessible areas. Now, the Planning Commission has considered it because of our request and of the unanimous demand of this House, and there was a little increase of Rs. 400 crore in budgetary support. But that amount of Rs. 400 crore is not sufficient. What we wanted was that the budgetary support, which was 75 per cent in the year 1951-52, should be restored because railway is not only for the Railways, but railway is for the entire country. Unless we have railways, we cannot have industrialisation, and we cannot have development in agriculture, in industry and in our economy.

It is also that Railways cannot be only a commercial organisation. We cannot consider Railways to be a commercial organisation. In a country like India, there must be social responsibility on the Railways also, and because of that, the Central Government should bear the expenditure on expansion and extension of the railway network.

There is a scope for increasing the revenue also. We will have to see whether, in the Budget presented by the Railway Minister, he has tried to do that. In our country, the freight traffic is to the extent of 1,200 billion tonne kilometres. But how much is being carried by Railways? The Railways are carrying only 291 billion tonne kilometres. Is there any scope to carry, at least, 75 per cent of the freight traffic which is there is our country? There is a scope to do that.

[Translation]

SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : The freight traffic by railways has got reduced than that by road.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I am coming to that context.

[English]

We suggested that Railways should try to carry, at least, what they used to carry in the year 1951-52. Railways used to carry 78 per cent of the freight traffic in the year 1950-51 and gradually, within these years, Railways reduced it to 38 per cent or 40 per cent.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : What about the passenger traffic?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Same is the case with the passenger traffic. There was a reduction in the passenger traffic also. So, Railway should try to increase the freight traffic as well as the passenger traffic. If Railways carry 72 per cent of the freight traffic, then what will be the saving in foreign exchange? The saving will be Rs. 15,000 crore in foreign exchange. We are importing petroleum products and in order to carry one billion tonnes, Railways need five million litres of high speed diesel, and in order to carry one billion tonnes by road, the road sector needs 35 million litres of high speed diesel. So, if more freight traffic is carried by

[Shri Basu Deb Acharia]

Railways, it can earn revenue also. Last time, I gave an example. Coal India is producing about 300 million tonnes of coal every year, although China is producing 1,000 million tonnes of coal every year. Railways are carrying only 135 million tonnes of coal. Coal is the bulk traffic of the Indian Railways. If Railways carry 100 million tonnes of coal more, then it can earn about Rs. 6,000 crore. Why? coal is carried from Asansol, Dhanbad and Talcher to Chandigarh or to Delhi or to Punjab by road. Why can it not be done by Railways? You will see that there is a reduction in the revenue also. In the last several years, there is a reflection in the reduction of revenue also.

The net revenue also declined from Rs. 4,136 crore in 1995-96 to Rs. 3,503 crore in 1996-97 whereas the operational ratio has also been increased to 91 per cent from 88 per cent in the year 1995-96. The question is whether we are in a position to carry more freight traffic or not.

Sir, we have five per cent railway network in our country. Our target for this year is 410 million tonnes. The Railway Minister has fixed the target for the next year at 430 million tonnes of traffic. Whereas China having six per cent of railway net work, what is it carrying? With almost the same network, China is carrying four times traffic more than what the Indian Railways carry. We have 62,000 KM. of railway track. China has 67,000 KM. of railway track. In 1947, we had 53,000 KM. of railway track. From 53,000 KM. of railway track, our achievement is to the extent of only 62,000 KM. In 1949, China had only 11,000 KM. of railway track. Now its achievement is from 11,000 KM. to 67,000 KM. of railway track. But it carries four times more than what our Railways carry. It carries more than 1000 million tonnes of freight traffic. We can also do that.

Our priority has to be fixed. What should be our priority? Should our priority be gauge conversion alone? I am not objecting to converting from metre gauge or narrow gauge to broad gauge wherever it is necessary. Can we have really the unigauge system in our country? We cannot have it. In this House, when the Project Unigauge was conceived, I told the then Railway Minister Shri Jaffer Sharief that his dream would remain a dream but in future we would not have the unigauge system. The point is that we will have to have the broad gauge, the metre gauge and the narrow gauge systems also.

What have we done? In regard to increase in our capacity, is the metre gauge system less efficient than the broad gauge system? The metre gauge system is not less efficient than the broad gauge system. There are many countries like South Africa, Malaysia and the East-European countries which are having the metre gauge system. They have metre gauge system and that metre gauge system is more efficient than even our

broad gauge system. In respect of our goods trains, our average speed is 25 KM. The average speed in those countries is more than 55 KM. in respect of goods train. If we can increase the speed of our goods trains, if we can strengthen our track, we can carry much more. But we have not renewed our metre gauge track. For years together, this metre gauge system has been neglected. Last year, while replying to the discussion on the Railway Budget, the Railway Minister admitted that the Ministry of Railways should try to acquire metre gauge rolling stock also. But he has not placed any order for the metre gauge rolling stock - for coaches, for wagons and for replacement of the old and overaged metre gauge track. We are having a track of 50-60 years old. In my constituency, you know, Sir, the Railway Ministry is renewing the entire track in the Adra-Midnapore section.

But the track that we are using, is a sixty year old track. We have reduced the allocation on track renewal which is most essential for safe and efficient railway operation. Even the high-powered Committee like the Railway Reforms Committee recommended that over-aged tracks should be replaced, wiped out and a time-bound programme should be taken up. We will continue to have the over-aged tracks even till the end of this century. We have spent more than Rs. 6,000 crore for gauge conversion. What is our return? I asked this question last time also as also before last year. I have not yet received any reply.

I wanted the Railway Ministry and the Railway Board to examine it or to make a study as to why we have invested Rs. 6,000 crore for gauge conversion. The norm is that the return should be 14 per cent. It was 12 per cent earlier. Now it has been increased to 14 per cent. What is the return? What is the addition in our capacity? Has the capacity been increased? Has any study been undertaken? I have not yet received any reply.

I request the Railway Minister at least to undertake a study as to why we have invested Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 7,000 crore for gauge conversion. I would like to know whether that conversion at all has added to industrialisation. When this argument was made, we criticised it. The Standing Committee on Railways had also criticised it saying that massive gauge conversion was not rational and it was not appropriate. Instead of investing this amount of Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 7,000 crore on gauge conversion, that amount should have been invested on expansion of railway network. We are asking for railway lines.

I must congratulate the Railway Minister as I had done last time, for taking steps to linking backward areas of North Eastern region with the railway lines. The amount that was available with the Railway Ministry was spent for gauge conversion. Had that amount been spent for extension of railway network, by this time, most of our areas which are not connected with railway

network - even now, there are district headquarters in West Bengal and in other States also like Dumka, Dinajpur or State headquarters of North Eastern States which are not connected with railways - we would have got railway lines in those areas also. What should be our priority? Our priority should not be massive gauge conversion. We should make our metre-gauge system also as efficient as others. Our priority should not be to import high-power electric locomotives by spending Rs. 700 crore. It is now a *fait accompli*. This decision was a wrong decision. We had criticised it in this House also.

[Translation]

SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : Achariaji, you should mention something about advertisements also...(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I leave it for you.

SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : You speak on it every time.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : This time I leave it for you. You may speak on advertisements.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please do not waste your time.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : You can exclude this time.

Sir, we are importing and we have already imported engines. I had myself, when we were committed to visit CLW, inaugurated the Second AVV Engine which was assembled by CLW workers. The engine is good. The technology is modern one and up-to-date. We do not argue on that score.

But my point is, whether we can afford to spend Rs. 700 crore for mere import of 36,000 three-phases horse power locomotives with technology or our production unit can produce locomotives of 5,000 horse power. Although our technology may not be up-to-date technology but with Rs. 700 crore we can lay more railway lines in inaccessible and backward areas of our country.

So, our priority should be expansion of the network. For that, the hon. Minister of Railways has increased the amount by about Rs. 100 crore, *i.e.*, from Rs. 285 crore which was last year to Rs. 399 crore in this year's Railway Budget. But an increase of Rs. 100 crore will not be sufficient, Mr. Railway Minister. You will see that during the course of debate so many demands come for new lines.

When I went into the border areas of Assam, Bengal and Kooch Behar to attend a rally, I was surprised to see that 60,000 people came there for one single demand, that is, a new railway line from New

Moynaguri-Kooch Behar-Dhubri-Baxirhat-Dhubri-Jogigopa. Amar Da was also there with me. So, I spoke to the hon. Railways Minister about the demand of 60,000 people and requested him to consider it. I am happy that he has considered it. He has included it for survey because unless the survey is done, a new railway line cannot be sanctioned. It is the demand of all the political parties not only of Kooch Behar but also of North Bengal and West Bengal to give new line there. Mere survey will not satisfy. Along with the survey, please sanction those lines. Along with the conversion from meter gauge to broad gauge from New Jalpaiguri-Siliguri-Alipuduar and Kooch Behar, give a new line now.

We have gone to Guwahati. We have seen the bottlenecks. Only one single broad gauge line is there, which was opened in 1984. After 1984 - not prior to 1984 - so many trains were introduced. Every year, new trains are introduced but the capacity is not being increased. So, our priority should be an extension from single line to double line and to clear the entire backlog and for increase in allocation for signal and telecommunication system in railways. The Standing Committee on Railways, after the Ferozabad Accident, had considered it. Even the present Railway Minister also participated in that debate.

This year, he has brought out a booklet.

Good information is there. Here also human failure is about 86 per cent. Is there any scope for the reduction of human failure? He has admitted here and stated that "signalling plays a vital role in promoting safety by minimising the impact of human error and in safety of train operation". Signalling and telecommunication are very vital, very important for efficient and safe railway operation. If track circuit was provided in Ferozabad Station in Allahabad Division, that accident would not have hapened. Simply because the track circuit was not provided, Shri Ghore Lal, who was the Switchman, was penalised. So, is there scope for reduction in the human failure? There is a scope for reduction in the human failure by induction of modern technology and by improving our signalling system.

We are still using age-old signalling system. There are three or four types of signalling systems. Why can we not have a uniform signalling system? Why can we not spend more for signalling system? But, instead of spending more for signalling system, he has reduced the allocation for signal and telecommunication. He will, in reply to this debate, say that the reduction is not in the signalling, but in the telecommunication. Both signalling and telecommunication are important. Communication between the car and the driver, communication between the driver and the station master and the control, all these are required. So, I request him not to reduce it, but try to increase the

[Shri Basu Deb Acharia]

allocation for signal and telecommunication. He will say wherefrom he will get the money. He can reduce the allocation for gauge conversion. He can try to carry more freight traffic and he will get money. So, there is a scope for increasing the revenue.

SHRI KALPNATH RAI (Ghosi) : Just a minute, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN : He is not yielding. He has got very little time.

SHRI KALPNATH RAI : He is giving me the time.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : This will be excluded from my time, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Achariaji, are you yielding?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I am yielding.

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh) : Sir, he can ask for clarification from the Railway Minister But he is not the Railway Minister.

[Translation]

SHRI KALPNATH RAI : Achariaji, has ability of a Minister. What I would like to know from is how to mobilise resources?

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : You read my speech. We have told about it there in.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Achariaji, I have already informed the House and you also that the total time allotted for your party is 29 minutes.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Now I am coming to a very important subject concerning one crore sixty lakh persons.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I am not stopping you.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I am not speaking irrelevant. This is a policy matter. I will later on come to some of the projects and some of the demands. Our Members are also expecting that I should mention all these things.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I am not objecting to it.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I know Sir, you will not object to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I am not objecting to your speaking. Please make it hurriedly so that others can also take part.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I am coming to my point. I will come to the specific points afterwards, including my point on your constituency also.

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is no extra facility for that.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : There are about 120 lakh passengers who use the Railways. The Standing

Committee on Railways has recommended an increase in the allocation for passenger amenities. After the recommendation was made by the Standing Committee, the allocation was increased from Rs. 40 crore to Rs. 60 crore. Then, subsequently, it was increased to Rs. 103 crore. But this year, it has been reduced from Rs. 103 crore to less than Rs. 100 crore.

There are a number of stations where the basic minimum amenities which ought to be provided are not provided. This is the experience of all the hon. Members of this House. You will not find even rail level platforms there.

In my district, one narrow gauge line Purulia-Kotshila, has been converted into a broad gauge line by spending Rs. 15 crore. There is one station, Gurhjaipur, which you have visited, where you have addressed a number of meetings at the time of elections. You will be surprised to know that a full-fledged station has been converted into a halt station. Even a rail level platform was not provided there. There are a number of stations where the usual amenities are not existing. I request the hon. Minister not to reduce the allocation for this... (Interruptions) You should not look at the clock. You kindly forget about the time. Let me make my points hurriedly.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have got more time. But you complete it as soon as possible.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Then I come to the suburban services in Calcutta - both the Sealdah Division and the Howrah Division. The Howrah Division is in your constituency. You have raised a number of complaints. You have also sent a number of letters to the hon. Minister. You will be surprised to know the plight of the local passengers of Sealdah and Howrah. About thirty per cent of the EMU coaches are over-aged there... (Interruptions)

[Translation]

Yadavji, was not present, he went to Goa, we were there.

[English]

It has been admitted that thirty per cent of the EMU coaches in Sealdah and Howrah Divisions are over-aged but there is no plan for their replacement because your programme for acquisition is only for 200 EMU coaches which will not be sufficient. You can manufacture. You can ask the manufacturing unit. Jessops is a public sector undertaking. They can manufacture EMU coaches. Both the production units, RCF and ICF can manufacture EMU coaches. So, you should try to procure more EMU coaches from them to replace the entire over-aged EMU coaches. Why can Calcutta's suburban service not have them if Mumbai's suburban service can have twelve EMU coaches? Why can Calcutta not have that so that the capacity could be increased?... (Interruptions)

[Translation]

I am coming to that point. We went to Jamalpur. Before that no Parliamentary Committee visited the place we remaining there for three hours. We went there.

[English]

It is the oldest workshop. You will be surprised to know that the capacity of such a good workshop is not being utilised. I made a suggestion three years ago that even our workshops can take up manufacturing of rolling stock. Why should we import brake-down cranes from foreign countries? I have objected to it. I have written to the hon. Minister not to import these brake-down cranes. These cranes of 140 tonnes capacity can be procured from Jamalpur. Shri Jagdambi Prasad Yadav, your Jamalpur workshop can manufacture them. Jessops can manufacture brake-down cranes.

The workshops in our own public sector undertakings can manufacture them. Why should we import crane? Why should we spend crores of rupees for importing cranes, coaches and wagons? There was a crisis. He has planned for acquisition of 26,000 wagons for the next year. Wagon industry is the most important industry of the State of West Bengal. Sixty thousand workers are directly involved and another sixty thousand workers are indirectly involved in manufacturing of auxiliaries. They have stated the overview of the Ninth Five Year Plan. They have stated that Railways would require 1,75,000 wagons during the Ninth Five Year Plan. If you plan for 26,000 wagons for the next year, how will you be able to acquire 1,49,000 wagons within the next four years? So, you plan for acquisition of more wagons. Unless you have more wagons, you cannot carry more freight. Unless you have more coaches, you cannot carry more passengers.

Sir, you have the experience of travelling by the local trains. I too have the experience of travelling in the local trains. Yesterday also I came from Agra by a local train to catch Rajdhani Express.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You should also have the experience of time.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : See the plight of the coaches, not in the EMUs, but the conventional coaches of local trains. You will not find shutter. The coaches are dilapidated. The fans do not work. During night, there is no light. We had the experience. We went to Ranchi to inaugurate a division. In the morning we got into one train. We found how the passengers use the lavatory. We found there was no door. How are these trains maintained? How can the coaches of the passenger trains and the rakes be maintained, if you reduce the staff strength? Essential posts are not being filled up. In Railways, there is an instruction to reduce two per cent staff strength. There is an embargo in the

appointment. From 16 lakhs last year, the staff strength has been reduced to 15 lakhs. Railways is the biggest employer. The unemployed youths of our country expect employment in the Railways. Thousands of apprentices who have received training in the Railways are waiting for employment. But vacant posts and essential posts are not being filled up. As a result of this, maintenance of coaches is not properly done. I request the hon. Minister to fill up, at least, the essential posts.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The hon. Minister wants to respond to you.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : So, I will get more time to speak.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Chairman, I am grateful to Achariaji. He is raising very useful and important points. I assure him that I will go through every point raised by him and take action thereon. He asked as to where from the money would come, and then went on to answer the question himself. As I said at the outset, there is the question of availability of funds. I am no economist but unfortunately a burden of Rs. 4500 crores has come on us due to the Pay Commission. Last year we had earmarked Rs. 1000 crores and this year Rs. 3500 crores have been allocated for this purpose. We have levied taxes of Rs. 1800 crores this year and in this way we will have to spend Rs. 1700 crores more. As he has said that we have got budgetary support of Rs. 450 crores from the Government, he is the Chairman of Standing Committee so he knows that there is pressure on account of rolling stock as well as signalling, new railway lines and gauge conversion. I know how much pressure is exerted for gauge conversion in those areas where there is metre gauge. Uniguage has become into vogue from which we can not deviate as on date. All can do is that metre gauge about which it was said,

[English]

They will be withered away.

[Translation]

and I have noted what he has said just now, the meter gauge would require track and production of which is also needed, as has been put by him very rightly.

I would like to say only that railway form part of the Government of India. If Government of India impose a cut on expenditure and direct to reduce it by ten per cent, in that case I agree to you. The Railways had 19 lakhs employees which number stands reduced now to 16 lakhs in four years time. He is Chairman of the Standing Committee, therefore, I would like to say that his recommendations and suggestions are very important for me. Whenever our officers attend the

[Shri Ram Vilas Paswan]

meeting of the Standing Committee, they say that they are pulled up by the Standing Committee and do not know what to do? Therefore, I would like to inform him that only three thousand Safai karamcharis have been reinstated by him which involved no extra expenditure. We made it plain that works will not be got done on contract system. Whatever money is required therefore, will be made permanent by us. As will be seen from the newspaper daily, we are being criticised daily as to wherefrom Ram Vilas Paswan has sanctioned/created these posts? So far as casual labourers are concerned we are not having to pay any extra amount for 57000 casual labourers. But we are being put to criticism daily in the newspapers on account of these 57000 casual labourers. Therefore, I would like to submit that the house is supreme. I will reply to these points in details. But since he is the Chairman of the Standing Committee as Railway Minister I request him that whenever he presents his report here, he should in his recommendations and the officers who come to attend the meeting of Standing Committee should be spared being pulled up, rather they should be given a pat on the back.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : It is not so. I appreciate hon'ble Railway Minister. But 56000 casual labourers must have been regularised earlier.

[English]

In 1980, the then Railway Minister, Shri Kamalapati Tripathi assured the entire casual workers at that time.

MR. CHAIRMAN : How much time do you require more?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I will take another ten to twelve minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have taken the entire time allotted to your party.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : In 1980 Shri Kamalapati Tripathi was the Railway Minister and he assured that the entire casual workers numbering about 2,75,000 would be decasualised and regularised.

[Translation]

It must have done earlier. But the step he has taken to regularise 56,000 casual labourers is very good. We have been demanding for it for a long time.

[English]

Alongwith regularisation of 56,000 casual workers, he has also made an assurance. Even the former Minister Shri Jaffer Sharief has assured on the floor of the House regarding absorption of coal and ash workers numbering about 4500. I have submitted the entire list

of workers to the Railway Minister who were retrenched because of the closing down of steam locosheds and phasing out of steam locomotives. Due to this, the workers were rendered jobless. I have sent that list to the Minister; and I request him to fulfil the assurance that he gave on the floor of the House so that all the casual workers will be regularised.

I request him to consider their case and implement the assurance given on the floor of the House.

I was referring to the problems of the commuters of Calcutta suburban. In 1990, Shri George Fernandes brought out a White Paper on the Bombay suburban. An in-depth study was conducted by the hon. Minister of Railways. I would also request that a White Paper should also be brought out in respect of Calcutta Suburban also. The Ministry of Railways should conduct an in-depth study on the problems faced by the commuters of Calcutta Suburban.

He has referred to Metro Rail and Circular Rail. I have travelled the entire stretch of Circular Railway. I have seen with my own eyes the importance of Circular Railway as well as extension of Metro Railway from Garia to Barrackpore. He has stated that the survey upto Barrackpore is going on. But the techno-economic survey has been completed in regard to extension of Metro upto Garia. So, what prevents him from taking up the construction of extension of Metro from Tollyganj to Garia? Why should we have to wait for the survey report upto Barrackpore? Barrackpore is separate and extension of New Garia is separate. So, I would request the hon. Minister that, while he replies, he should assure that House that some amount would be allocated for the construction of extension of Metro from Tollyganj to Garia because the survey has been completed.

He has stated in his Budget speech that the survey is going on regarding circular railway. I have with me a survey report conducted by RITES. I have got a copy of the survey report in regard to Circular Railway, not only completion from Princepghat to Majerhat but also doubling and electrification of inter-circular railway. It is a misnomer to call it a Circular Railway. It is not at all a circular railway unless that stretch of five kilometres is completed. Calcutta has a different type of problem. Calcutta has only six per cent of road space whereas Bombay has 18 per cent, Delhi has 22 per cent and Chennai has 14 per cent of road space.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude in two to three minutes.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : You know that my district, Purulia is a backward district. Bankura is also backward. The hon. Railway Minister has stated that he would introduce a rail bus after restoration. I tried to find out from the Pink Book the amount allocated for

restoration of Bankura-Damodar River but I did not find it. Yesterday, DRM (Adra) telephoned and told me :

[Translation]

Funds are available how would restoration take place. As I said there must be something positively.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Whatever amount is spent on the restoration, would be provided this year. This year, not later...(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Thank you. It is very good.

One train is being extended from Barauni to Tatanagar. If it is extended upto Tatanagar, then definitely that train will go from Barauni-Asansol-Adra-Purulia-Tatanagar which is the shortest. I am making this request because now there is no train from North Bengal to South Bengal or to South Bihar.

If he Starts from New Jalpaiguri instead of Katihar, North Bengal would be connected with South Bengal.

16.00 hrs.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I think, you want the route to remain the same but it should start from New Jalpaiguri.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Instead of Katihar, it should be from New Jalpaiguri.

[Translation]

From Barauni to Asansol, Adra, Purulia and Tata...(Interruptions)

SHRI ILIYAS AZMI (Shahabad) : All these things can be discuss in his chamber itself.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : There are other demands also. A survey should be taken up from Tarakeshwar to Arambagh. There is a need for double line from Sherraphulli to Tarakeshwar. Then, electrification from Barasat to Hasnabad is also very important.

He has included Ranaghat...(Interruptions) I am also for Tamil Nadu.

MR. CHAIRMAN : For all.

AN HON. MEMBER : He is particular about West Bengal.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Now, I come to Tamil Nadu. A train goes to Cochin passing through Asansol-Adra-Bankura-Kharagpur once a week. It is a very important train because the patients, particularly from Asansol and Adra, go to Vellore and Madras for treatment. Therefore, I suggest that its frequency should be increased from one day to three days in a week.

There is a need for a south-bound train from Dhanbad. I have received a memorandum signed by 30,000 people from Dhanbad. On my suggestion, two

important towns of Bihar, namely, Dhanbad and Tatanagar - one known for coal and the other for steel - were connected. And Suvarnrekha Express was introduced three years back. In this Budget, he has already stated that the frequency of that train will be increased from six days to seven days a week.

There is also a need for a train in the reverse direction in the morning from Tatanagar to Dhanbad.

A fast train from Purulia to Howrah is also required. Now, there is only one express train, that is, Purulia Express. I request that an express train from Bokaro via Purulia-Adra should be introduced during the evening time. There is a Shatabdi Express from Bokaro. There is a need for a Shatabdi for North Bengal.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You write a letter to the hon. Minister.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I wrote hundreds of letters. The hon. Minister receives the maximum number of letters from me alone...(Interruptions) I request the hon. Railway Minister to introduce the reverse train and try to increase the freight and try to increase the freight and passenger traffic. He should give the priority which is due so that expansion of the Railway network could take place in our country. The areas not connected so far should be connected by the Railways. With that, the industrial and economic development of our country will increase and prosperity will be there.

[Translation]

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE (Ratnagiri) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, speaking on Railway Budget, I would like to submit that the people of the country have been facing the burden of price-hike as a result of price-increase in petroleum products for the last one year. Now they will have to face another spurt in prices due to increase in rail fare and freight charges. The hon. Minister of Railway has presented the price hike in the House with sugar coated words. He stated that though unwillings, he had to increase the fare and freight charges...(Interruptions) The fare changes have been increased in sleeper class by 5 percent, 10 percent in all AC Trains. 20 percent in super fast trains in which parcel or goods are carried and 12 percent increase in freight charges. This will surely have an impact on the people of the country.

The foodgrains have been spared from this increase but the people cannot survive in freight charges, the prices of medicines, cloth alongwith all other items are likely to increase in future. The increase of 12 per cent in freight charges will result in almost 25 per cent increase in all other items from April 1st. It will affect the poor of the country whether he travels by train or not.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, railway is a service and this is the duty of the hon. Minister to provide this Service to the public of entire country. Discharging his duty the hon. Minister has said that train should run as well as

[Shri Anant Gangaram Geete]

the facility should also be provided to the passengers. Thus, keeping in view both these things, it has become compulsory to increase fare as well freight charges.

Increase only either in fare or freight charges is not likely to solve the problems. Therefore, we will have to find ways and means to provide railway service to the common populace at cheaper prices. I had given some suggestions in this regard, last year. But it seems those suggestions have not been considered in this year's Railway Budget. Sir, we can say proudly that the Railway is the biggest Public Enterprise. But the maximum number of theft take place in this enterprise. Unfortunately, it did not find any mention or any measure in this regard in the speech of the hon. Minister. Had we taken strict action to stop this, we could have saved a large amount.

Sir, more than fifty percent commuters out of one crore and ten lakh daily commuters belong to Mumbai city. I represent Maharashtra. Whenever there is a mention regarding Maharashtra, every body says Maharashtra is a developing state. This Budget indicates that though, Maharashtra is a developing State at present but the Ministry of Railways does not want to pay its attention towards Maharashtra. The MPs of Maharashtra feel that the State is being meted out step-motherly treatment at the hands of railway. I am not against providing rail facility to any State, be it North Eastern States of India or Bihar. The people of every part should get railway facility. I represent Konkan province. It is for the first time that the railway has entered the Konkan. It is unfortunate that though the railways gets 50 percent of the total revenue from Maharashtra but there is no mention of any gauge conversion, doubling of lines, laying of new railway tracks or other facilities in the States.

AN HON. MEMBER : There is BJP-Shiv Sena Government in Maharashtra.

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE : The Ministry of the Railways should not be concerned with the party affiliation of the Government.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : This Government discriminates with such State Governments.

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE : There should not be discrimination but it seems that discrimination is likely to be done. It would be better if they do something for Maharashtra out of the fifty percent revenue collected from the State. If you just think of this Budget, you will be able to know all this.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Not even a penny has been increased in the fare in the State where fifty percent people travel by train.

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE : We congratulate the hon. Minister of Railways for not increasing the fare.

No doubt, he has not increased a penny in the fare in the State where fifty percent people travel by train but it should also be taken care of as to how they travel? The passengers of Mumbai travel by train under compulsion. In case of fare-increase, there might have been dissatisfaction among the entire public of Mumbai. No doubt, the Government did not increase the fare but the facilities for the passengers should have been made better.

I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Railway for being instrumental in cleaning all the stations of Mumbai. They are clean at present but we want them clean in future also.

SHRI SUKDEO PASWAN (Araria) : Please thank the hon. Minister for this.

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE : I am thanking him for goodwork that he has done. I want that the bridge from where hawkers have been removed, should be always clean. When passengers detrain, nobody has to walk since they push one another. This is the condition of Mumbai. Therefore, attention should be paid towards providing facilities. Konkan railway is going to be commissioned. The hon. Minister said in his speech that Nizamuddin-Thiruvananthapuram Rajdhani train would be rerouted as Nizamuddin-Goa Thiruvananthapuram. Though it would be close to capital Goa but it should not affect Konkan. Since the trains are departing from Sawantwadi-Kurla, it never reaches on schedule. I would like to request you to think that when so many trains would be introduced on this route, they should also reach as per schedule. Several hon. Members of Mumbai and Konkan have sent a better that Kurla-Sawantwadi route should be started from Dadar. The people of Konkan have extended their co-operation to a great deal in the construction of Konkan railway. Konkan railway has been constructed in record time. The people of Roha, Sawantwadi and Konkan damaged that instead of Kurla, it should go upto Dadar. When I saw you in your office and discussed in this regard, you had assured me to take decision very soon after consulting the concerned officers. Therefore, I request you to do it for the benefit of the people of Konkan.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister of Railways has mentioned in his Budget-speech to regularise 56 thousand casual labourers. The Government should think about contract labourers of Konkan Railway Corporation who have extended their great co-operation in the construction of Konkan Railway. They should be absorbed in some capacity after the work is over.

Sir, in my last year's Budget - Speech, I had suggested that if the airspace of Mumbai Station is utilised commercially, more money can be mobilised but no action seems to be taken on this suggestions in the Minister's speech. I reiterate my suggstion that if the air space of Mumbai station is utilised commercially, more money can be mobilised. You have done a laudable

job by not increasing the fare of sub-urban trains but the passengers travelling long distance in sleeper class, will have to pay more fare. You have also proposed to increase freight charges. It will also have its impact. If you could provide some more facilities to passengers, the passengers will be able to bear with this price-hike. Therefore, I would like to submit that the passengers are not satisfied with the facilities provided to them by the Railways. They come across several difficulties in journey. I would like to request you that the train passengers should be provided some more facilities.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI (Khajuraho) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have to speak only for five-seven minutes because Shri Parmod Mahajan has already spoken in this regard on behalf of my party and after that there remains little to speak about.

First of all I would like to thank the hon. Railway Minister for announcing Lalitpur-Singrauli rail line. At the time of the constitution of State Reorganisation Commission in the year 1956, my Parliamentary Constituency, Khajuraho was in Vindhya Pradesh. When State Reorganisation Commission decided in regard to the State in which Vindhya area was to be annexed, the team which came to visit that area, wrote a comment in its report. They wrote that "this area is poverty and hunger stricken whereas it is rich in minerals. This area can only progress if there is Railway line." In 1977, when Janata Party came to power, Laxminarayan Naik was elected Member of Parliament from there. Shri Madhu Dandwate was the Minister of Railways at that time. The issue of conducting survey of Lalitpur-Sangrauli railway line was raised repeatedly. Unfortunately, the Government of Janata Party fell and when the Congress came to power the matter of Lalitpur-Sangrauli Railway line was rejected and the file was closed saying that it is not profitable. After that, when I became Member of Parliament in the year 1989 and George Fernandes became the Minister of Railway, I discussed it with him. He was about to start this work when the V.P. Singh Government fell and after that Chandar Shekhar Government also fell untimely. After that, when Congress came to power, the work of Lalitpur-Sangrauli rail line was again set aside. but the then opposition leader hon. Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji accompanied me and talked to Shri Jafer Sharif. He tried to do it but unfortunately that went out of his hand. The people of my constituency had been waiting for this railway line for the past 20 years. When this new Government came to power, we sat on dharna in front of Rail Bhawan. The Minister of Railways was in the House at that time. That was an historical moment when Satpal Maharaj ji took the letter of the Minister of Railways from us and stated that they would complete its survey at the earliest and they would definitely make effort to lay that rail line. Satpal ji has joined politics from religious field. I had asked Satpal ji at that time that he was a sant and I was also a Sanyasi. You please

promise that you would get it completed and he got this survey conducted in time and hon. Minister of Railway encouraged me to speak to Madhu Dandwate ji. I Requested hon'ble Madhu Dandwateji, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission that when he was the Minister of Railways, he was in favour of this line and with the efforts of hon. Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji and Madhu Dandwate ji, our Minister of Railways announced the Lalitpur-Sangrauli Railway line on February 26. Mr. Chairman, I cannot mention as to how lakhs of people of our area were sitting before T.V. to know the fate of Lalitpur-Sangrauli rail line. As they heard that this line has been sanctioned, they switched off their T.Vs and came out in the streets to celebrate the occasion with fireworks.

Mr. Chairman, I want to urge upon the Minister of Railways through you. Just now hon. Member was saying that the work of Konkan Railway was sanctioned and it appeared that it was about to be completed. You have allocated Rs. one hundred crores for the rail expansion of Jammu-Kashmir, Rs. three hundred crores for the expansion of rails in North-Eastern States. I urge upon the Minister of Railways that :-

"Ya to jholi bhar de datta, ya fir khali rahane de

Kisi aur ke aage daman fallane, mere bas khat bat nahi."

Please complete this railway expansion in record time. Therefore, I urge upon you to announce the maximum budget allocation for Lalitpur-Singrauli railway line.

Hon. Chairman, whenever any budget and particularly Railway Budget is presented in the House all note one thing that how much the rail fare has been increased, whether it has been increased or not. Whereas increasing fare is not so useful or harmful as is the increasing of freight charges. But our politics has become superficial. It has become superficial due to uncertainty of politics and instability in centre. That is why our attention is drawn to superficial things. Each Government faces uncertainty. As a result thereof every budget - whether it is general budget or railway budget is prepared on political considerations.

This time, no increase has been made in the second class rail fares. In fact, all the people appreciate the fact that passenger fare has not been increased. However, the Railway Minister has hiked freight charges by as much as 22 per cent because earlier 12 per cent hike was effected in the freight charges and this time there is a proposal to increase it by 10 per cent. It appears as if the stall sweet has been served wrapped up in the siviler paper. Which makes one to believe that only A.C. class fares have been hiked and no increase has been made in the second class railway fares. Ours is a poor country and here people have least sympathy for the affluent class so much so that people even think that

[Kumari Uma Bharati]

there is no problem if there is hike in the A.C. class and no burden is put on the poor and they will be able to travel conveniently but we should not forget that those travel in A.C. Class or A.C. first are officers in some company which some where or other affect the company and in the process the poor people working in that company are also affected. This is alright that the Railway Minister has announced that those are certain items which will be affected by the hike in the freight charges...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Had we not raised that, had we kept below 10 per cent and did not have given concession on foodgrains then we could have kept it to 8-9 per cent but it was also very necessary as we wanted to give relief to the poor under P.D.S.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Railways is a country in itself, it is also culture in itself which has got its own identity. This is a country within country. One crore and 10 lakh passenger travel daily by railways and 16 lakhs officers and employees are working in the Railways department. Keeping in view the huge strength of staff if we streamline its system then most of the problems being faced by this department. could be solved. If the Railway Minister does not indulge in politics and devote his time in the department then the dilemma whether the Railways is commercial venture or seavier could be solved. In fact, the Railways is both a service and commercial venture and if we want to keep a balance between these two then we will have to streamline the whole remark of the Railways.

Through you, I would also like to invite the attention of the Railway Minister to the increasing incidents of murder loot and dacoities in the trains passing through Bihar. Just a little while ago an hon. Member belonging to the Janata Dal was saying that we should not try to gain political mileage out of this issue. He has also given the data of Maharashtra states but we will have to see that for how many days there data have been collected. However, we will have to see as to why those is a spurt in the incidents of loot and dacoities in the trains in Bihar. An incident has also been reported in today's newspaper. But the problem is that the Railways and the State Government are accusing each other. However, if these incidents keep rising and extend to Uttar Pradesh also then, the situation would be worst of its kind.

I would like to make one suggestion to the Railway Minister that like the buses where it is written that "the passengers will take care of their luggage themselves", while issuing tickets the chest of each passenger should be stamped with. The passengers themselves should take care of their lives' or a gunner should be provided to each rail passenger or they be given license for weapon so that they can defend themselves. Or the

Railway Minister may put the issue of security and safety of passengers in the trains for the consideration of the cabinet.

Hon'ble Chairman, Sir, it is a matter of shame and disgrace that due to a lot of disturbance and noises during zero hour such an important matter goes unnoticed. But the way the women were dragged out of trains and subjected to rape in the jungle, this is indeed a matter of shame and is really unfortunate. It would be indeed unfortunate if any Member thinks that we are playing politics in this house by raising such incidents. If those incidents are not raised in this house then where else should these be raised? We are not playing any politics by raising these incidents. Those who think so, should just imagine how the shivering women were dragged out of the railway coaches, how they were forced into jungles in presence of Brothers, fathers and sons and what would have been our state of mind had someone among them been our sister or daughter. Hence, safety of passengers should be given a serious consideration. Arrangements for safety to the passengers could be made but there should be proper coordination between the Railway Ministry and the Chief Ministers of States through which the train passes. The only proper arrangements could be possible.

Hon'ble Chairman, Sir, last year, a provision of Rs. 1 crore and 10 lacs had been made for providing facilities to the railway passengers but during the current year only Rs. 80 lakh have been provided. I would like to urge the hon'ble Minister that this provision is not enough. It will not serve any purpose. It is not that I have any sympathy with the passengers travelling in A.C. Coaches, but it is also a fact that they are not criminals my point is that proper bedding arrangements are not available in A.C. Coaches. Catering facilities are also not good. The same is the case with second class coaches. So, what I feel is that when it appear that the passengers are travelling comfortably. Then the provision can be reduced but since we see that no proper facility is existing so in such cases, the funds should have been increased.

Mr. Chairman, I spend most of my time in trains. I hardly stay at home. My party has assigned me some work. So, in the connection I have to travel most of time by car, by air or by trains. That's why, I know that the passengers are facing a lot of inconvenience day by day. The quality of food is also deteriorating. In such a situation, cutting the budget, meant for providing facilities to the passengers, further is not good. By doing so, the passengers are being subjected to more inconveniences. I, therefore, urge upon the Minister to pay some attention towards it. Although, he has conducted raids several times to check the arrangements but such a thing used to take place during the kings and rulers regime when the king used to take stock of the situation of the welfare of people, in disguise. But this a modern age and if the

officials and employees are put under control then, of course, the situation can improve to some extent. I urge that the budget should be increased.

Hon'ble Chairman, Sir, I also want to make a complaint. Earlier "Bhajans" (devotional songs) used to be played early morning in Rajdhani Express. I, myself, sing devotional songs and when I listen to these songs in the Rajdhani Express in the morning time. It gives peace of mind.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI DILIP KUMAR RAY) : We thought you would talk about food.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI : Brethren, you people are voracious. You have assembled here to eat. So, you people always think about food. I am talking of devotional songs.

One day, when I was travelling in Rajdhani, I noticed that the record of devotional songs was not being played in the train during morning hours and instead instrumental music was on. I called the train Superintendent and asked him the reason and the name of the person on the instructions of whom, it had been discontinued. The train superintendent said that on the instructions of Hon'ble Railway Minister Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, it had been discontinued because Lord Ram and Krishna name repeatedly came in the devotional song and the railways had to be secular in all respects.

Hon'ble Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to ask Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, since his very first name is Ram, so will he change his name from Ram Vilas Paswan to "Dharam Nirpeksha" Paswan?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I am ready, if you could insert word "Ram" before Shri Murlī Manohar Joshi's name and Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee's name.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI : Bhartiya Janata Party has open headed. Ram Janmabhoomi Movement. I want to tell the Minister that, whether or not he does it seriously but atleast for the namesake he should do something.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the dies, where you are sitting on the top of it 'Dharmachaakra Pravartanay' is written in 'Sanskrit', and Sanskrit is Hindu God's language. I want to urge the Railway Minister to ask the Prime Minister why Hindu Gods language is written there. This matter will become communal. Why 'Ram' is written on the 'SAMADHI' of Mahatma Gandhi. Through you, I would like to tell the Minister not to go into such Pseudo secularism and make the arrangements in this regard in all the trains, Rajdhani and other trains, where devotional songs used to be played earlier. There should not be any superficiality in such things. It does not convey any message of communal harmony. On the contrary, it carries adverse message.

In the end I would like to request the hon'ble Chairman about the Taj Express.

[English]

I am not saying it for the sake of saying it.

[Translation]

Both, the tourism and railways would be benefited therefrom. Mr. Minister, I am talking about an important thing.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I am listening about the Taj.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI : I would like to request you one thing. If you could extend Delhi. Gwalior Taj Express upto Mahoba, then it will be convenient for the passengers going to Khajuraho. Despite Khajuraho being a very famous tourist place of International fame a very small number of people go there. The reason is that everyone cannot afford a flight. They have to go upto Jhansi in train and then they have to board a bus. It takes a lot of time. Hence, I request you to extend Taj Express upto Mahoba instead of Jhansi and provide one more stoppage at orchha because orchha too is a place of historical and religious importance and it is emerging as a big tourist centre. If Taj Express is extended upto Mahoba, the number of tourists will increase and they we would also be able to push up the income of railways.

Hon'ble Minister has done a good thing for which I thank him. Jabalpur-Gondia railway line has been converted into broad gauge. Similarly there has been a demand for conversion of Nainpur to Nagpur railway into broad gauge. The work on Delhi Rajhara railway line is held up. Morena railway station is located on a very important railway line. Major trains pass through this railway line but no train bound to South stops at Morena. So, I request the Minister to provide a stoppage to Southern Express or G.T. Express at Morena.

It may sound communal, but the Hon'ble Minister may get blessings from that place. There is a temple of Pitambarmai, Bagulamukhi devi in Datia in Madhya Pradesh where devotees in large number visit. A fair is organised in Pitambar Mai temple from 8th to 16th April but there is no stoppage of any goods train in Datia. If stoppage to all the trains except Shatabadi and Rajdhani is provided at Datia the number of tourists will start increasing. Pitambarmai's temple is 23 kms away from Jhansi. The people have to board the train of Jhansi and from there they have to catch a bus to Datia resulting in a lot of inconvenience to them. If all the trains except Shatabadi and Rajdhani start stopping at this place, it will also become a big tourist centre of National level. Datia is a religious as well as historical place.

Mr. Chairman, I have to say one more thing. I do not speak slowly as you do. Whatever I want to say, I finish it quickly. If arrangements are made for a stoppage of Jhelum Express and Punjab mail train at Datia, the number of tourists will increase day by day.

[Kumari Uma Bharti]

I would like to invite the Minister and the Prime Minister on behalf of grateful people, starving exploited people of my Khajuraho Lok Sabha Parliamentary Constituency and the poor exploited down trodden people of my region on whom fendal atrocities have been committed, to lay a foundation stone there immediately and to start work on Lalitpur-Singrauli line.

With these words, I thank you and conclude my speech.

[English]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Calcutta South) : I am really sorry to say that instead of supporting this Railway Budget, I am strongly opposing it. It is most unfortunate...*(Interruptions)* Regarding voting also, if the hon. Minister does not announce anything for West Bengal specially, I will not vote for this Budget. I am telling you very candidly for record. It is because, we, the 42 MPs, nine from Congress and the rest from the Left Front, are supporting this Government. Some people are directly supporting and some are indirectly supporting. But no new project is being given this time to West Bengal.

There is no regional balance in this Budget from the point of view of, as everybody has said, security, safety, punctuality and passengers' amenities. Even there is no plan of action with the Railway Department. The hon. Minister of Railways can satisfy particularly some individuals but what about the country's progress? Is there any modernisation plan of action with the Railway Ministry? Is the Minister of Railways having any plan of action? The hon. Minister has not yet announced any plan of action or any modernisation programme or any master plan for the Indian Railways though it is the largest Public Sector Undertaking. The Indian Railways is the largest in the world. You see the operation ratio. If you see it, then the financial position will be very clear. In 1995-96, it was 82.5. In 1996-97 the revised estimate was 86.3 and the estimates for 1997-98 is 91.4. These figures indicated that while in 1995-96 the Railways spent only Rs. 82.5 to earn Rs. 100. Also I can quote the other figures, but I am not going to quote the figures because then I will be wasting my time. Instead of wasting the time to quote the figures or strategy or strategic points and what the statistics is about, I want to tell you some practical things.

You will appreciate that I am not against Bihar. Even I am very happy that the hon. Minister has sanctioned something for Bihar because Bihar is a deprived State. But at the same time, you have to remember that in this big Budget, there is no regional balance. West Bengal, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh Gujarat and Orissa are deprived like anything. Even the people from Andhra Pradesh and Mumbai are saying that they are deprived. Then what for this Budget? I am really surprised to see this Budget.

You have said in your Budget speech that - I am giving you just one simple example - during this golden jubilee year of India's Independence, you are sanctioning some new projects. I am happy. But do you know that there is a place called Mahishadal in Midnapore District? Tamluk and Digha railway project is lying pending because you are not completing this project. It has been pending for the last 20 years. Every year, you are giving either Rs. 1 crore or Rs. 50 lakh or Rs. 10 lakh or Rs. 2 crore. What is this? My humble submission would be - if you think it is a humble submission, it is a humble submission. If you think it is a demand, yes it is a demand. If you think it is a grievance, it is a grievance.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Why is it pending for the last 20 years? Tell me.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : That is what I am asking you.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I am only a Minister for the last nine months.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : So what? You are the Minister now. That is why, I am asking this question.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : That is all right.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Everybody says that I have to experiment. I appreciate that you are Minister for nine months. Shall I say, instead of saying this as Indian Railway Budget, it is Ram Vilas Paswan Budget for only Saharanpur or for the only constituency, Patna? Do not force me to say all these things. For God's sake, do not open any Eastern Zone office in your Hajipur.

I know all those things. The hon. Minister should not provoke me to mention them...*(Interruptions)* I am not speaking for Bengal only.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I am trying and I have tried also. I had talked to Members of all the political parties of West Bengal. I had also told to the friends from Himachal Pradesh, they were annoyed. They were happy on that day when I told to friends from Surendra Nagar and Bhavnagar and Gujarat that their proposals had been passed in the budget but C.C.A. had not accorded approval, we are awaiting their approval. I say from the one of my heart that I never intend to think on party lines or personal lines over any matter. The way you fight with us, we also fight in the same manner with the Board. You suggest that I should do this. I would reply you about that matter and would try to finish the work and satisfy you within the resources available with me. So I would rather like to have suggestions. All the relevant information is available with me here itself whatever is possible we would try to do keeping in view your suggestion. Therefore, I welcome every suggestion.

[English]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : I do not have any grievance against the hon. Minister personally.

[Translation]

I am saying this only. I am happy with your reply. On anyone will be over only when you remove the regional imbalances and disparities made in regard to certain states. We are celebrating the golden jubilee of independence and on this occasion you have provided sufficient funds for that but the three places which I have mentioned which got independence prior to all others should be taken into consideration. The issue of Maisadal is pending for the last twenty years. I would like to you for whatever is introduced by you. I am saying this for your information only.

[English]

The hon. Minister knows that I met him personally. I asked him about it. We appreciate that it is not possible to satisfy each and every-body. We know about the constraint of funds; we know all those things. But he should appreciate the need for the extension of the Metro Railway from Tollygunj to Garia. I have been fighting this case for the last five years. Not only myself, everybody has been; I must thank the Minister and my other honourable colleagues because we are all united in this. If there is any development process we are all united from that point of view.

For this project, I personally met the Members of the Planning Commission three or four times. The Planning Commission has written me a letter that they were morally agreeable to it. After that the hon. Minister mentioned about the survey. What more survey is needed? I mentioned about the passing of the Railway Budget. The Railway Ministers have to please the people. The hon. Minister may dedicate this railway line from Tollygunj to Garia in the name of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose because this is the Birth Centenary Year of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. I met the hon. Minister personally in his Chamber; he should not forget it.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Yes.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : The hon. Minister should say 'yes' or 'no'. He mentioned about a survey. What more survey does he want? The RITES has already submitted the report. I have seen the report. The Chairman of the Standing Committee also agreed with it. Yes, there should be a survey for the line from Dumdum to Barrackpore. But the extension of the line from Tollygunj to Garia may be sanctioned. Why not? Not even one paisa is being sanctioned. Are we an unwanted child?

We are proud of the Metro Railway, Calcutta. But for the maintenance of the Metro Railway, Calcutta, not a single paisa is being given. Does he hon. Minister

know what the condition at present there on the Metro Railway is? Sometimes it is burning. Sometimes so many incidents are happening each and every day. But I do not know how far the hon. Minister knows about them. It is not possible for the hon. Minister to get all the information but the local officials should keep him informed.

So, I request the hon. Minister to kindly sanction money for the maintenance of the Metro Railway and for the extension of the railway line from Tollygunj to New Garia Railway Station, this year itself.

Please lay the foundation stone to dedicate it in the memory of Subhash Chandra Bose on his Birth Centenary Year. Please also make a survey for Barrackpore to Dumdum line.

Now, I will say something about Circular train from Princesghat to Majherhat. As you know, Calcutta is a very congested city and its population is increasing day by day. So, it is the urgent need of the hour that a circular train should be started from Princesghat to Majherhat. But, so far, nothing has been sanctioned.

Then, I will say something about pending projects. I will tell you only about three or four pending projects. First, I will take up Eklakhi-Balurghat project. You said earlier that "I was the Minister for only the last nine months". Do you know that two years before when Shri Jaffer Sharief was the hon. Minister of Railways, he sanctioned only Rs. 1,000 for this project?. Then, I went to his Office. I returned Rs. 1,001 to him by 'Account Payee' cheque. I said : 'Mr. Minister, you take back this money. We do not want Rs. 1,001 for this Eklakhi-Balurghat project'.

In the North Bengal area, there are no communication facilities except a few trains. North Bengal is a gateway of North-Eastern region. You have to remember that. It connects Gangtok, Bhuttan, Nepal and other areas also. It even connects Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and all the seven Sister States. So, North Bengal is a gateway of North-Eastern region. But you will feel ashamed that there is no train from New jalpaiguri and from Coochbehar. Can you not start one Shatabdi Express train from Coochbehar to Jalpaiguri or Coochbehar to Howrah? One Shatabdi Express must be started immediately. The population of the North Bengal is very high. All the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority Communities are staying there. They are very poor. It is the border of Bangladesh. It is too far from Calcutta. So, you can introduce one train. I may tell you that even then you can earn more revenue. So, Eklakhi-Balurghat line is pending since 20 years. I do not know for how many years the Digha-Tamluk line is pending. Then, Bajboj-Namkhana and Howrah-Amta lines are pending and I do not know when they will be completed.

Now, I will say something about the other grievances of the hon. Members. Bankura is a very neglected area.

[Kumari Mamata Banerjee]

As far as Bankura-Purulia, Barasat-Hasnabad and Bankura-Howrah areas are concerned, there should be at least one fast passenger train. I am asking for one fast passenger train to be started from Bankura to Howrah. In North-Dinajpur, there is a demand from the people for a new train from Gajol to Ganguri. It is just a few kilometers away and they do not have any communication facilities. I think everybody has visited this place. I have also visited this place many times. There are no communication facilities. That is why, I am asking for it.

Shri Basu Deb Acharia has said something about Nagrakata. The N.F. Railway have a metre gauge stretch at Chapnamari. It is surrounded by 60 gardens. There is a road connected with Bhutan. But this station has also been withdrawn. This is a very neglected area. I am not asking for any new trains to my constituency. You forget about my constituency. But you give something for Bengal. you are giving something for the North-Eastern region. I am happy. But you sanction some projects for hilly areas like North Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, etc. Himachal Pradesh is also a hilly State. I know their problems. Rajasthan is a very potential State as far as tourism is concerned. So, I will request you to do something for all these areas.

There is a demand for a new railway line from Tarakeswar to Arambag. There is also a demand for a double line from Seorafully to Tarakeswar.

Then I will say something about the train Kanchanjunga. It is a very important train. It is going up to New Jalpaiguri Station because of Assam problem. Can you not extend it up to New Coochbehar Station? Then, you can accommodate the Assam people also because they are facing acute crisis.

Kanchanjunga Express is supposed to go up to Guwahati but because of the insurgency problem, it is now going only up to New Jalpaiguri. May I request you that if it is not possible to extend it up to Guwahati, then you extend it from New Jalpaiguri to Coochbehar because Coochbehar is a very important area?

With regard to some fly-overs, I have to say something. Three-four days back, ten person died in Simlagarh in Hooghly district. They are demanding a fly-over to be constructed. Then, in Morigram in Howrah district, there is a demand for a fly-over. Similarly, in Sonarpur in my constituency also, there is a demand for a fly-over. I have got your reply - the ex-Railway Minister's reply also - saying that the Central Government is agreed to this but the State Government is resisting it. I know that it is a joint venture project. So, I request you that these fly-overs, the Sonarpur fly-over and the Morigram fly-over, be constructed. You have already sanctioned Bomdelgate fly-over and the Lake Garden fly-over. I do not know the exact position with regard to

these two fly-overs. So, I want to know specifically what is the position now.

Even some Orissa people have requested me to tell you about the Nizamuddin-Sambalpur Express. They want this train to be extended from Sambalpur to Titlagarh. If that is done, it will cover five backward districts. So, this is also my request to you.

This is the Golden Jubilee year of our Independence. The Freedom Fighters are allowed to travel by two-tier class, along with their companion, But they are not allowed to travel by Rajdhani Express or Shatabdi Express. So, I appeal to you to consider this point also.

Regarding Arjun Awardees also, the Indian Railways sanctioned a pass for them but the companion is not allowed to travel along with them. Secondly, they are not allowed to travel by Rajdhani Express and Shatabdi Express. Suppose an Arjun Awardee is now about 65 to 70 years of age, he cannot travel without any companion. So, I request you to consider this from humanitarian point of view.

Regarding dacoities, yesterday, I came by Rajdhani Express. I tell you that people are very much scared of dacoits. Somebody may say it is not true, somebody may say it is true, but I tell you that the passenger are having a feeling whether they will pass through Bihar by this train safely or not. This sort of a feeling is going on. I do not know whether somebody is going to sabotage you or sabotage Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav. It may be an inner fighting also. But because of the inner fighting, human lives should not be lost. This is a rumour that is going on. Until and unless the Central Government and the State Government work together, it is not possible to stop all these things.

I do not know whether the Railway Minister knows what happened on 26th February.

[Translation]

I would like to tell you an interesting incidence. The day when you were presenting the budget in the House a goods train engine was used carrying Rajdhani Express. Engine of a goods train who attached to Rajdhani Express.

AN HON'BLE MEMBER : Driver of goods train?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Engine of goods train carried the Rajdhani Express.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : We will enquire about this.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : You don't have the information. If the engine of goods train carried the Rajdhani Express, what will be the fate of its safety security. You must know about this.

[English]

Last Sunday, our colleagues came from Calcutta by Rajdhani Express. The train was late by about 20 hours. If a train is late by 20 hours, then what is the use of travelling by a train?

[Translation]

There was no question in the House and it was being said that where are the M.P.s. and then we come to know that the train is late by twenty hours. If this goes on the Indian Railways will be in the dol drums.

17.00 hrs.

Yesterday also a dacoity took place in the Delhi-Howrah Janta Express. V.V.I.P.s. travels by Rajdhani and Shatabdi but there are certain local trains like Janta Express, Kalka Mail, Purnia Mail and other trains. Whether Patna has become such a place from where no train is available. Yesterday, while I was travelling in a train, the train stopped about some distance from Patna. At that time all started discussing. Therefore, I request you to think about safety and security of railways. If train services are not improved there cannot be any development because this is the main communication.

[English]

My last point would be regarding wagons. You know that in West Bengal, there are Burn Standard Company, Jassop Company and other public sector companies. They are all important public sector undertakings, but are not getting wagons in proper time. Sometimes, the wagon order is being reduced by the Railways resulting in thousands of workers now starving for food. You just see the Eastern region as a special sector because Orissa, Bihar and other North-Eastern States are also neglected States. Therefore, in the Eastern Railway, wagon order should not be reduced and they should get the wagons in proper time... (Interruptions).

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (Silchar) : Justice has been done to the North-East.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : I told that some people are happy and some people may not be happy. They cannot satisfy everybody. You have taken a policy decision and 82 new trains have been given this time. It is okay, but not a single train for Bengal has been given. You just remember it. I am telling you just for your memory. That is why, I am pleading for all the States where the regional imbalances are there.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : You tell us from where and upto which place you train services West Bengal

[English]

You tell me, I will consider.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : I have already mentioned so many things.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Paswan, she has told about Bankura-Howrah.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : I told you about Bankura-Howrah Express. I told you about the old project Digha-Tamluk and Eklakhi-Balurghat... (Interruptions). About new trains, I have mentioned about metro rail extension from Tollyganj to New Garia... (Interruptions) and circular railway from Princepghat to Majerghat. I have also asked for New Shatabdi train from Coochbehar to Howrah and Bankura to Howrah... (Interruptions). I am saying for my State. Trains from Sealdah to New Jalpaiguri and Bankura to Howrah are new trains, I have asked for a Shatabdi train. On the occasion of Netaji's birth centenary year, I have asked for metro rail extension and whatever's birth centenary year, I have asked for metro rail extension and whatever I have said... (Interruptions). There is no train from Sealdah to Delhi. So, if you consider to start a train from Sealdah to Delhi, certain important areas like Krishana Nagar, Barasat, Murshidabad and Malda districts will be covered... (Interruptions).

SHRI SYED MASUDAL HOSSAIN (Murshidabad) : Lalgola-Sealdah is not on the map of Eastern Railway.

17.04 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : You are saying so because it is not in the map. Why should it not be there? It should be included. Whatever I have said, there is no partisan in this matter because we want development of our State. At the same time, we want development of other States also. That is why, I have said that whatever you have done for your State, You do it and we do not have any objection or hesitation to that. At the same time, if you do not consider our proposal for West Bengal, I can tell you at least from our side that I am not going to vote for this Budget. Instead of supporting this Budget, I will oppose this. So, please consider this.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : I will give the whip.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : My Bengal people have given whip to me to fight out this case and get results. That is why, I want results from you. If you give us results, we will deliver goods for you and if you do not give us results, then we know what to do and what not to do. That is why, Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev has not yet issued a whip. But the people have issued whip to me to say all these things. My commitment is my commitment and I think other hon. Members will also follow all these things. I am telling you and you will be in crisis.

[Kumari Mamata Banerjee]

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mamataji, I can reply to your each and every query just now and satisfy you but I will speak later on. You continue to support us. We have everything. I would like to give you an example. You have said about Gariya. Taliganj to Gariya is not a Railway project, it is the project of urban development. As the Metro Rail Project is going on in Delhi likewise Railway is not the nodal Ministry...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : We have your reply...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATERJEE (Dumdum) : It is unacceptable. If that was the case, why did you mention this in your Budget?...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, Calcutta Metro is part and parcel of the Indian Railway...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SYED MASUDAL HOSSAIN : If you do not want to do anything, do not do. But please do not mislead us...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE (Berhampore) (WB) : Sir, the Railway Minister should not be afraid of Mamataji's whip.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I would like to submit that we would sit together so as to find a way out. It is not a question of prestige for us. Being the Railway Minister we are happy to consider some thing which comes under us but when the matter is between one Ministry and the other it becomes difficult, therefore, I have said that we would ponder over it...*(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BENERJEE : I had taken up this matter with the Railway Ministry and the Planning Commission. I have the reply of the Railway Ministry with me. Have you conspired now. It is not with the Urban Department. Earlier it was under the Urban Development but not now. Now it is under your department. It is under the joint venture of the State Government and the Railway Ministry.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : The survey had been completed in December, 1995.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Whatever I am saying in this regard are coming from the core of my heart. I want that a proper reply should be given otherwise, whip or no whip but we are not going to vote in your favour.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Mamata ji, please conclude.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : All right. I conclude.

SHRI S.K. KARVENDHAN (Palani) : Sir, first of all, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on the Railway Budget on behalf of Tamil Manila Congress (Moopnar).

Under the leadership of hon. Prime Minister, Shri Deve Gowdaji, our Railway Minister, Shri Ram Vilas Paswanji has presented a Budget which is highly appreciable and welcome one.

The Railways in India provide principal mode of transportation for freight and passenger traffic. It brings together people from the farthest corner of the country and make possible the conduct of business-sight seeing, pilgrimage and education. The Indian Railways have been a great integrating force during the last 100 years. From very modest beginning in 1853 when the first steam engine was rolled out from Bombay to Thane, The Indian Railways have been a great integrating force during the last 100 years. Through the present Budget, the hon. Railway Minister has tried to cover the entire India, an area of 32,87,263 square kilometers stretching from the snow cornood Himalayan Heights to the tropical rainfed forests of South India.

The decision of the Railway Minister to limit the proposed the across the board, increase in passenger fares between five per cent and ten per cent and in freight rates to 12 per cent from which essential commodities like fertilizers, kerosene and liquid petroleum have, however, been exempted in the present Budget proposals.

It will no doubt be received with a relief by all classes of rail users. The above exemptions will reduce the burden on the users, who apprehended an increase in the prices of commodities produced with petroleum feedstocks.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The hon. Member can make use of the points in the note but should not read from a written speech.

SHRI S.K. KARVENDHAN : I agree, Sir. The hon. Railway Minister presented a balanced Budget by way of getting Rs. 1,800 crore additional revenue through revised fares and freight rates, for giving better services to rail users. The present Budget gives an assurance to produce 2,000 passenger coaches and more than 300 locomotives along with 26,000 wagons to be procured in the year 1997-98, which would rescue rail travel, at least to a small extent, from the hardship inflicted on them.

For the past 50 years, the North-East region, that is, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur by railways. But in this present Budget, our hon. Minister took steps to connect all those places. It is highly appreciable and a welcome one. He has also allotted Rs. 300 crore for development and expansion of the railway infrastructure in the North-East region also. It is a welcome step. It is also appreciable that this Government has decided to

give top priority to develop railway infrastructure in backward areas, particularly in the Northern region.

A majority of rail users in India are very poor people. They are travelling only in ordinary and second-class category in the mail and express trains. To help the 93 per cent poor passengers, out of four billion, the second-class fares, platform ticket charges or the season ticket charges have not been raised in the present Budget. I thank the hon. Railway Minister for this.

With respect to the MRTS project in Tamil Nadu and Chennai, the first phase of MRTS-Chennai is nearing completion. Up to Velachery this present Budget also provides additional money to complete the scheme. An amount of Rs. 10 crore was allocated in the Budget.

The hon. Railway Minister has given great importance to gauge conversion project from Chennai Beach-Trichi and Trichi-Tanjore and also allocated Rs. 138 crore and Rs. 67 crore respectively. I also thank the Minister for the inclusion of Mysore-Chamarajanagar with extension to Mettupalayam, Quilon-Tiruchendur and Tenkasi-Virudnagar for gauge conversion. The gauge conversion between Chennai Beach-Madurai is the most important scheme in the country, which would help the public. Palani is one of the important hill stations in Tamil Nadu. Yearly, Twenty-five lakh devotees come from throughout India and even from abroad also. The yearly income is not less than Rs. 30 crore to Rs. 40 crore. There is no rail connection to that place. It is nearer to Dindigul. The Gauge conversion must be taken up from Trichi-Dindigul-Palani up to Coimbatore. Moreover, there is another place. Nigiri hills is one of the most important tourism place throughout India. Trains are running for the past 50 years to 100 years, but there are no new trains connecting those places. The gauge conversion from Trichi-Chengalpattu is also an important one for the development of railway network in Tamil Nadu. If the gauge conversion is taken up in that place, it will enable the Government to earn more income also. These tourism places in Tamil Nadu have to be connected by railways.

With respect to the communication system, the hon. Railway Minister has to take steps to remove the defects in the railways and allot money for the development of the communication system.

With respect to thefts in the trains, in this Budget, the hon. Minister has provided money to appoint additional women constables and also other police security personnel. Thefts are occurring between Bhopal and Bina and those who are travelling in the trains running towards South are affected by these robberies. I request the hon. Minister to take effective steps to give protection to those who are travelling in the passenger trains running towards South.

Also, I want to tell the hon. Minister that about 11 million passengers are travelling every day. The hon.

Minister has come forward to set up a Complaint Cell under his own supervision. This is welcome. I thank him for this good gesture.

With respect to catering services, I feel it is very poor in all the trains. Through this present Budget, he has promised to take steps appoint qualified persons for catering services. I welcome this step also.

I come to the next point. In June 1996, he conducted a meeting at Chennai where all the 39 Members from Tamil Nadu were present. We requested the hon. Minister to take steps for ordering gauge conversion in certain sections in Tamil Nadu also. In Budget also, he promised it. In the present Budget also, he has promised it. Tamil Nadu is a developing State. For example, I want to say that gauge conversion from Dindigul to Coimbatore is very very important. Coimbatore is one of the important places in respect of textile units. Further, Pollachi, Udumalpet, Palani, Dindigul Triupar, Dhavapuram and Madurai have to be connected by broad-gauge trains. Therefore, I request the hon. Minister to take steps for the development of railway network in Tamil Nadu. It will also give good earnings to the Railways.

with this, I conclude.

DR. B.N. REDDY (Miryalguda) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir! at the outset, I thank the hon. Minister for one good thing which he has done in that he has introduced a Rajdhani Express from Secunderabad to Delhi. Let me first thank him for that. I am thanking our hon. Minister for giving Andhra Pradesh a Rajdhani Express from Secunderabad to Delhi.

There are several other requests which I would like to make through you, Sir. There is no doubt that Andhra Pradesh comes first in the alphabetical order. But in several matters, it is still a backward State. We have several areas where new rail services have to be provided. The hon. Minister has ordered surveys in respect of a few lines and I again thank him for this gesture. But some other lines have not been included. I would request the hon. Minister to consider them and then make provisions this year. One request is in respect of a survey for a new railway line from Hyderabad to Vijayawada, a straight line along our main road via Nakrikal-Sruyapet-Kodada-Nandigama. One new line from Pattancheru to Sangareddy is to be laid. Further, we need a circular railway around Hyderabad-Secunderabad. The Government has provided several circular railway lines for several cities, specially for Bombay and Calcutta. We have been demanding such a circular railway. The point is Hyderabad-Secunderabad is a growing city. Again, I demand that a train between Hyderabad and Gulbarga has to be introduced. I also request for the construction of a new line between Miryalguda and Mottummarri, for which survey is in progress. I further request the hon. Minister for an overnight new fast passenger train between

[Dr. B.N. Reddy]

Hyderabad and Vijayawada and the doubling and electrification of Nadikudi-Guntur-Vijayawada section. I have also given a letter to the hon. Minister already. I will give you this copy also. But there are a few small things which I would like to bring to your kind notice. I have also given separate letter for these things. There is one Ramannapet town where certain trains stop. But there is no proper platform there. Very recently, one man, while alighting the train, fell down and died.

I have also written a letter to you about this Ramannapet station in Nalgonda district and I will again you a copy of that letter. There is no platform constructed in this station. We have made our requests several times about it.

Then there is a Faluknuma Express which starts from Secunderabad and goes up to Howrah. This does not even stop at the district headquarters Nalgonda. But there is a technical stop at Miryalguda which is a commercial headquarters as from there the division changes. We have been requesting for some time past to stop the train there. Kindly consider this. You may instruct the concerned authorities for the same.

I also request you for doing the needful in respect of certain small things. As we represent our area, certain people who work as constables or some ordinary people in the Railway Protection Force, come to the Members of Parliament expecting that we will take care of their grievances. They come with a small request for transfer from some corner of India to their towns or to their villeges on the ground of some family problem or ill health. It is a very small matter to be told in this august House. Still I feel, if we the representatives of the people cannot take care of some of these problems, they will definitely feel that we are not doing justice to them. I have also written letters to the hon. Minister about this. These requests concern only to Andhra Pradesh. I request you to please look into them.

There is one more thing. From Mukhed to Nizamabad, a survey is going on for conversion of railway line from metre-gauge to broad-gauge. I request you to get the work done at the earliest.

Coming to some general aspects, I would say that the increase in the rates by five per cent, ten per cent and twenty per cent has been very carefully done. We have to appreciate it. If there is no increase, there is no development. If there is no development we will definitely feel it. Whatever is being done about it, we feel that the increase in rates is very carefully done. What we feel about is the five per cent increase in the sleeper charges. As the hon. Minister has said, 93 per cent of passengers are ordinary people who travel by sleeper coaches. In 1995-96 Budget, sleeper charges were not levied for the first 200 kilometres. But this time, sleeper charges

are levied for all the distances. Kindly consider this aspect.

Coming to the second part, a ten per cent surcharge has been levied on those people who travel by air-conditioned coaches. It is fine. But the 12 per cent surcharge on the freight definitely looks to be a matter of concern to everybody. This has to be taken into consideration. We request you to see that this is considered.

Coming to the casual labour, out of 56,000 casual labours, around 16,000 have been regularised.

It is also promised that before the end of 31st March, 1997, another 14,000 casual labourers will be regularised and a balance of 26,000 will be regularised by the end of 1998. This is as per your Railway Budget.

We really feel happy that it is being done methodically. But the procedural matters and so many other things definitely will give some difficulties in between. But I know that the hon. Railway Minister is stern and he would definitely take up with the concerned officials so that before 31st March, those 14,000 casual workers are regularised. I know that the regularisation of 14,000 workers may be difficult but you draw a line and tell your officers to do their job so that it is successfully completed. So many casual labourers are coming all the times requesting us to represent their case. I, therefore request once again that this job may kindly be got done.

Now, I come to the point of level crossings. The hon. Minister had given a Statement after becoming the Minister that he will definitely take it seriously; and unmanned gates will be manned as many as possible, at the earliest. I have got the statistics—may be subject to correction—that out of 40,671 crossings, 24,554 are still unmanned and only 16,117 are manned. We know, even at the places where they are manned, because of some mistakes by the people who are involved there for signalling and other things, certain accidents are taking place. Today also we have come to know from the newspaper reports that in Madhya Pradesh, 16 people have died and many are injured due to collision between a train and a bus. So, I would request the hon. Minister of Railways to look into the matter of manning level crossings very seriously.

I would also like to know whether any Budget provision has been made in this respect. I also tried to know, after the Statement of the hon. Minister in this august House, about the progress made about how many unmanned level crossings had been manned but I could not get the reply.

So, here I would request the hon. Minister that please make some schedules that so many manning of level crossings should have been done this year and so many will be done next year and like that. I shall be very happy if this work is completed before the year

2,000 A.D. If he can do it, perhaps he will be doing a great service to the nation.

Now, I come to the Safety. Giving a new railway line, expansion and other things is very important, there is no doubt, but the safety of the people is also equally important. Wherever we have created some facilities, if there is no safety, we will not be doing justice to our expansion, progress and development. So, I would request him once again to give a serious thought to this and make provision if it is not done already.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : He alone cannot do it. Shri Chidambaram has to do it...*(Interruptions)*

DR. B.N. REDDY : No, no, he is also equally important person there in the Ministry. He matters. If he is serious, it will be done. So, let us give him the credit.

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE : So, he is the leader of the House...*(Interruptions)*

DR. B.N. REDDY : He is the leader.

So, I would request him, through you, to look into it. Level crossings are really very important. In my area from where I come, not only human lines are lost but also several cattle are dying due to unmanning of level crossings. They do not know; nobody is there and they just walk. Several times these things go unnoticed. Nobody pays any compensations. Those poor people cannot go and ask anybody. Even if they go for compensation, no body hears them.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : May I just make an intervention?

I have an interesting story to narrate, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir.

On Thursday, we were travelling by Rajdhani Express. That Rajdhani Express was fitted with a new imported engine. It was going very smoothly. At Dhanbad, it came in touch with several buffaloes and they were killed. And then, it proceeded for Burdwan. It was an imported engine. It killed a few more cattle. There the problem was that the imported engine was not meant to come in collision with the cattle and therefore, at Bardwan engine itself broke-down and we had to wait for two hours for refixing the engine and reach the house.

SHRI BASAVARAJ RAYAREDDI (Koppal) : Our buffaloes are stronger than the foreign engine!

DR. B.N. REDDY : I am coming to the end. I have to make a few small points.

Shri Basu deb Acharia was mentioning about the question of priority of our funding. I would not exactly say that I know more than all of you do. But definitely perhaps it has to be considered that comparing to other requirements other developments, whether the amount-thousands of crores of rupees-which is being provided

for gauge conversion and being distributed over the years is really being done according to the necessity under the circumstances. This could be given a serious thought. If we look at the way we need the facilities and the resources that we have, definitely our resources are less and we need a lot of facilities. So, under these circumstances, kindly give a serious thought to gauge conversions and take the priority as per the circumstances and necessities.

Regarding quality, every sister and brother here have spoken about it. I do not want to go into them. But as times pass by, we have to improve the quality also. We say so many things about the rate, that it should be less. But I would say that the rate of anything should be reasonable and the quality should be good. Saying that everything should be cheap is not correct. We cannot get things cheap and still have quality. But at a reasonable cost, whatever we are spending, we have to improve the quality as times pass by as we have to be in this competitive world.

Regarding robbery and killings, everybody has been talking about it and I also heard the hon. Minister saying that his Ministry does not have that portfolio. That may be true. But still he is not different from other Ministers. He is in the same Government and in the same Ministry. What I mean to say is that he need not take all the responsibility on his head, but he has to sit along with other people in the Government. The Prime Minister and the whole Cabinet is responsible for the safety of the passengers.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : What I said was it is between the State and the Centre.

DR. B.N. REDDY : Even the Chief Minister can sit with the Union Cabinet Ministers. Instead of the Cabinet Ministers saying that it is the job of the State, and the Chief Minister saying that it is the job of the Central Government, they have to see that both the Central Government and the State Government take care of the safety aspect.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Shri Narayan Athawalay.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU (Rajapur) : I will speak in his place, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY- SPEAKER : All right.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Thank you, Sir. I must compliment the Railway Minister for his stand that he just announced while intervening in the debate that if the representatives of States had gone and met him, he would sort out their issues. He mentioned the names of a few States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and some other States. He has also volunteered and offered that if the MPs from West Bengal go and see him, he will definitely be able to sort out their issues. I feel he would also consider Maharashtra in that category, so that we can go to him, explain to him about our issues and be able to get them sorted out by him.

[Shri Suresh Prabhu]

Mumbai, which is the capital of the State contributes significantly towards the revenue of the Railways. I think, he will definitely be able to sort out the issues pertaining to our State.

Many hon. Members have expressed concern about the security of the passengers who travel by the Railways. I would not like to say that in the case of railway passengers of Mumbai, in Mumbai trains there is no place for passengers to get in. So, there is no place for any dacoit. No thief can enter the trains in Mumbai. So, I will not be able to share the concern of the passengers on that count.

I would also like to draw attention to the project that the Railways have undertaken and completed successfully, the Konkan Railways. I happen to represent that constituency, especially the Konkan region and so I must compliment the Railway authorities for completing this project in a record time.

This project was envisaged and it was contemplated as a project for socio-economic development. This project is now due for completion. As per your statement, it is about 98 per cent complete and but for certain developments taking place in Goa, it is now on the Verge of completion. It is time to take stock of what we have attained by this new project.

Wherever there is a socio-economic project, it is needless to say that the local people should be absorbed in employment on such a massive project. This project has been completed only because thousands of people virtually donated their lands to the Railway authorities, that is they signed the documents without any hesitation, which is only a single example of how people have really contributed towards the development of this project. The various poor farmers, who offered their land even without knowing how much compensation they are going to get, have not yet got compensation for the precious land that they have parted with. I would appeal to the hon. Minister of Railways to immediately constitute a tribunal to go into the demands and claims of the various farmers and settle their disputes immediately. A railway project of this magnitude costs several hundreds of crores of rupees. I think, it is more than Rs. 200 crore. The component of land involved in that is hardly anything and it is time the Railway authorities really seriously considered about compensating the farmers at market price. Otherwise, they will be failing in their duty if they call it a socio-economic development and project and the social aspect of the project is excluded.

There are many people who have offered their land and not yet got compensation. That is one aspect. But the policy of the Government should be—and it has been demanded by me personally to Shri Sridharan, the Chairman of the Konkan Railway Corporation—that

those who are displaced should be given priority while giving jobs. This is not adhered to. Though the headquarters of the Konkan Railway Corporation is in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, the jobs have been given to employees who are not even residents of Maharashtra. So, I request that the policy of granting jobs to the locals, particularly the displaced persons who have offered their land should be scrupulous followed and the tribunal that I am requesting should also look into this aspect seriously.

The railway line starts from Kurla and goes up to Savantwadi. This is a new project. So, I cannot blame the officers of the Railway Board for not knowing the spelling of Savantwadi. They have misspelt the name in the Annual Report. This is a backward region. If it has to receive a backward treatment, it is understandable. But this railway line starts from Kurla, which is a far away place and is not convenient to any of the passengers boarding the train or alighting from it while they come from Konkan. So, my request to the hon. Minister of Railways is to please start this train from Dadar. The terminating point should also be at Dadar. It is a genuine demand of the people and I feel that is very simple and could be done. I am sure that the hon. Minister of Railways, while offering his reply, would certainly concede this demand instantly.

There have been several tracks which were laid when the railway lines were developed. So many institutions, so many houses have been damaged. It is the bounden responsibility of the Railway authorities to restore these. I think, this should also be done immediately because the monsoon is going to come and there will be a real loss of property and life to thousands of people unless the restoration activity is taken up immediately on a war footing.

There are so many employees who have been taken into employment by the Konkan Railway Corporation for the completion of this project.

So, my request to the hon. Minister of Railways is, not to dismantle this Konkan Railway Corporation because this Organisation is one of the finest examples of success. This is one of the best examples to show how to motivate people. We always say that we do not find motivated people in the public sector. But Konkan Railway employees are the most motivated lot one can find not only in the Indian Railways but probably in the entire public sector or, for that matter, in any entity in India. So this Organisation should not be dismantled. We should keep the commitment intact and we should also try to undertake the job elsewhere. If for some reasons, the Railway authorities displace the employees there, then it is the duty of the Railway authorities to absorb them in the parent organisation. They should not lose jobs. Fifty-six thousand locals and casual labourers are getting jobs there. So, this scheme should not be implemented at their cost.

I must compliment the hon. Minister of Railways for having recognised the services of many veterans in the field and he has been recognising the services of many veterans by giving their names to the railway project. This railway project is the brain child of Shri A.B. Walvalkar. When nobody thought about the Konkan Railway and when people thought it was a foolish idea, Shri A.B. Walvalkar, who no longer lives really professed and propagated this idea till his last breath. Sir, when this project is completed, I think, it is the responsibility of all of us to recognise the contribution of this great visionary. This project should be named after him.

I would request Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, the hon. Minister of Railways, also to recognise the role of Shri Nath Pai who was the veteran Parliamentarian. All those who have been Members of this House for a long time would remember his contribution. Probably, his name should also find a place somewhere.

There are some demands by the locals. The Konkan Railway passes through Ratnagiri and Sindudurga Districts. But it does not halt anywhere in Ratnagiri, besides Ratnagiri town and in Sindudurga District, it halts only at one place. It is necessary that those stations which you have created should be used and the train must halt at more stations than at present.

The Annual Report and the Budget statement make a passing reference to the Konkan Railway. The Konkan Railway Corporation is a separate legal entity. It is a part of Indian Railways.

I would like to know how much debt we have raised and when we are going to start the repayment of debt. The bonds are tax free and, that is why, the coupon rate is between 9.5 per cent and 10 per cent. How much would be the liability-interest and principal? How are you going to amortise these liabilities and over what period of time? For that, what additional burden would be there on the Konkan Railway Corporation?
...(Interruptions)

The Konkan Railway is a separate Organisation. I would like to know whether it is part of the Indian Railways or not, because some of the officers in the Konkan Railway are not permitting the ex-Members of Parliament who had been Members of Parliament for 15-20 years to travel in the Konkan Railway, saying that the pass of an ex-M.P. is allowed only on the Indian Railways and not in the Konkan Railway. Probably, the Konkan Railway authorities are thinking that it is separate and outside the purview of the Indian Railways. We must remind them that they are part of the Indian Railways. I am sure the Indian Railways would certainly let them know about it.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Do you mean to say that former Members of Parliament are not being allowed to travel in the Konkan Railway?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Yes. One ex-Member of Parliament, Shri Bapu Purlekar who had been the illustrious Member of Parliament and a well-known lawyer and of 75 years age, was refused entry into the Konkan Railways. It is very unfortunate. I had to apologise to him on your behalf. I am sure that I have the right to do that.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : If that is true, I now declare that former Members of Parliament and present Members of Parliament would be allowed to travel on any Indian Railway.

[Translation]

We have been receiving some complaints. It had been issued many railway passes in Shatabadi Express and Rajdhani Express. I got annoyed at it. I never do so, whenever the renewal etc. comes, I doubt that too because you want that to be done. I have issued an order that the passes issued in the Shatabadi and Rajdhani Express should be stopped. Due to that our Ex. Hon. Members of Parliament became the victim, which I never intended. The moment it came to my notice, I issued the passes that very moment. Today also many hon. Members were saying that this facility has been withdrawn for the ex. Members of Parliament but it is not so.

[English]

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE : Ex-MPs do not get reservation in Rajdhani Express Trains in their names.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : It will be done later on.

[English]

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE : When he was a sitting MP, he was allowed.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : It will be seen. The ex-Members of Parliament used to get the facilities in the Rajdhani and Shatabadi Express trains, it was withdrawn later on but these facilities have been restored again. They could not avail these facilities for one or two days because of confusion.

[English]

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE : But please do something for the Ex-MPs in getting reservations in their names in Rajdhani and Shatabadi Express Trains.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Alright.

[English]

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : I thank the Railway Minister for immediately acceding to certain demands. Let me, Sir, first finish the Konkan Railway part of it.

There have been, as I mentioned, some stations on the Konkan Railway which have not been used and at the same time, there are some demands from some people to have some more railway stations because when it was planned and contemplated, certain areas were neglected. So, I request you to please undertake a survey. I will give the names of the stations which should be there and which should be covered by this. I request you to please take care of this.

I was reading the Annual Report of the Railways. There is a Railway Recruitment Board which undertakes recruitment to bring about a rationality and to make sure that no undue favour is done anybody. I would request him to please form Regional Recruitment Board for the Konkan Railway because everything else is separate for this. Konkan Railway has all other systems; everything is functional autonomy there. So, this Regional Recruitment Board for the Konkan Railway is really necessary and I request the hon. Minister to concede to this demand also.

There is a Consultative Committee for various zones of the Railways. But there is no Consultative Committee for the Konkan Railways and so, the problems of the commuters, the problems of the people who travel by that and the problems pertaining to the Konkan Railway cannot really be redressed or addressed, otherwise. So, I request the hon. Railway Minister to please look into this.

As I just said, I am really proud to say that the Indian Railways are undertaking jobs all over the world. This is something which is really a cause of real celebration. We should really compliment the engineers and the people who are responsible for it. The Konkan Railway Corporation is a singular example of how it could be done in a record time, in a most difficult terrain which is not only known to India, but to the entire world. Why can we not use the expertise of the Konkan Railway Corporation to undertake projects elsewhere in the world, in difficult terrains, where probably this system can earn money for the Railways? We should not dismantle this Organisation which has been so superbly created.

One more word I want to say. I will be failing in my duty if I do not mention one thing about the Konkan Railway. Shri Sridharan who is the present Chairman of this Railway as well as his team of engineers and all those who have really made it possible should be felicitated in some form or the other by the people of India. It is time that we really record their services and their contributions. We award Padma Shrees and Padma Bhushans to several categories of people. Probably, one of those Awards should be given to them.

There has to be some thanksgiving, for this wonderful feat that they have attained by the people of India.

I want to mention another thing which is not coming under the Konkan Railway. It is a broader issue. We are embarking on a massive gauge conversion drive. During the year, probably we have done about 758 kms. of gauge conversion. When we do gauge conversion, the question which arises is this : when there are some railway facilities available in some form or the other, should we spend our energies, moneys and resources in converting that existing one into another type of gauge which may be the superior form. By doing that, we are really compromising and sacrificing the interests of other development and not laying adequate lines because funds are getting diverted into that.

Sir, it is time that we come out with a good policy about how gauge conversion should take place, what should be the trade-off between new rail development and gauge conversion, etc. You should really come out with a good concrete policy and this Government is committed to transparency. So, I think we should come out with a transparent policy on the basis of new railway lines to be started, matters like how we are reconciling to various demands from different parts of the country, how we are giving preference to one region, how we are going in for gauge conversion with reference to new lines are something which should be really debated and should be made as a part of the policy. This is what I feel.

About R&D exercise of the Railways, the hon. Minister has mentioned that various projects are already undertaken. My point is that some of the R&D projects are definitely meant for superior engineering in various parts of Railway operation. That is understandable and that is how it should also be. There is no R&D project undertaken on provision of passenger comforts, for the people who travel by trains to see what facilities could be offered to them to make them comfortable, etc. I request the hon. Railway Minister who really looks after the interest of the common man to undertake such a project so that when people travel by trains, they will find their life better than that it is now. So, R&D projects should also be undertaken with that kind of an objective.

There has been some improvement in the development of rolling stock of the Railways. We always say that rolling stock is now sufficient to cater to the demand existing in the country. But I find that there are several sectors which need improvement. You can see that coal accounts for a substantial portion of more than 60-65 per cent of the cargo handled by the Railways. But the non-coal component of cargo is really suffering because of non-availability of adequate rolling stock. So, it is time that we come out with a blue print for 10-15 years from now about the envisaged demand for the railway coaches and how we are going to cater to that. This is something which we should know.

The hon. Railway Minister must be complemented for Railways being the first organisation to come out last year with performance linked bonus. Because of that, all other sectors were also benefited. But in this Budget I do not find any provision made for this bonus to be paid. Is it that the Government is not thinking of paying any performance linked bonus this time, or is it that they are going to come out with a supplementary budget, or is that we want to show lesser deficit in which case every Department will stand in chorus and then they will really pay that bonus? This is something which we have to know. Is it that it was applicable only last year because it was the first year for you in office? I do not know about this and I think the hon. Railway Minister may say something about that also.

A part of 57,000 casual labourers have been absorbed. The very fact that they were made casual is probably because the nature of work was casual. Is it that the nature of the job was permanent but they were casual? It is a question which should be answered. If the nature of the job was casual, what are we going to do with the newly absorbed people and how are they going to be of use from production point of view? This must be mentioned while looking at the humanitarian side of it and while saying that they must be absorbed. Even I have said the same thing while speaking during the Budget discussion last time that there is a need to have some sort of a policy in this regard. How are we going to make better use of the services of these people is something which, I am sure, the Railway Minister may be able to tell us during the course of his reply.

There has been a Corporate Plan with the Indian Railways from 1985 till the end of this century. About twelve years have passed and only three years remain. The objectives stated in the Corporate Plan are very glorious and as far as objectives are concerned, Indian Railways should be wearing a different face as we have completed 12 years of Corporate Plan. I would like the hon. Railway Minister to let us know the objectives when it was started in 1985 and also now, when we are almost at the end of the Corporate Plan period. How much have we attained and if we have not attained the objectives, is he thinking of creating another Corporate Plan? In that case, what is the real purpose of creating a Corporate Plan if we do not even conduct a mid-term appraisal about what we have attained and all such things?

The Mumbai Suburban Railway contributes the highest revenue to the Indian Railway. It is really necessary that we must come out with a White Paper about how much revenue does this Railway contribute and how much are we going to give in return to the commuters of Mumbai suburban who have nothing else to travel by and are forced to go by these trains.

Probably, their life is more miserable than that of the animals who probably will be transported by the Railways. Mumbai Suburban Railway should be treated separately. There have to be separate norms. We should really cater to these passengers because Mumbai Railways are not parochial when I say this. Mumbai transports people from all over the country and, for that matter, even from outside the country. Those who travel by these trains must deserve a separate treatment in the national Budget. I think, we must really come out with a proper White Paper and a good policy about how Mumbai passengers would be properly catered.

The passenger safety is a point of concern to many hon. Members. I am not referring to dacoities in Mumbai Railway only. For a dacoity to take place, the dacoits must be able to get into the Railways. They are not as well trained as our Mumbai passengers. So, they cannot get into that. But it is time that we should start railway passengers' insurance scheme whereby all the passengers get a blanket insurance irrespective of the distance they travel because the accidents are taking place at a very high level. Our hon. Minister of Finance has also stated that the insurance sector needs competition. So, why should we not come out with the new insurance sector in which all the railway passengers will be protected? The risk will be covered and they will be able to travel with a free mind than what they travel now.

I was reading some of the figures in the Railway Budget. The thefts of cargo are taking place in the Indian Railways. Thus, the Railways have really to pay out a large amount of money as compensation and also to pay for the loss of properties. What steps are we really taking about the R&D mechanism, etc? Has the cargo handling taken place in a different way? Even at ports, we are really doing a lot of mechanisation to handle cargo. Are the Railways also going to handle cargo in a different way to make sure that the loss on account of thefts comes down significantly?

There are one or two points more. The fare structure also needs to be rationalised in the case of Mumbai. I will give the details to the hon. Minister.

The Rajasthan Tourism is surviving because of contribution by Indian Railways. He has mentioned in a Report in a very nice way as to how many tourists the Indian Railways handled. The handling of bulk cargo or handling of steel and coal, handling of passengers and handling of tourists is done by one single organisation. Are we not thinking of making subsidiaries for handling specialised type of passengers, like the tourists, so that the tourists could be properly catered to? The revenues of the Railways could increase and their specific needs could also be taken care of. The passengers travelling by suburban railways, the passengers travelling on trunk routes, the passengers travelling as tourists and the cargo cannot be treated at par. So, I think, there is a need to have some sort of a special subsidiary for

[Shri Suresh Prabhu]

handling the tourists as passengers. I hope, it will be done.

Out of the total land of 4.19 lakh hectare that the Railways possess 2,000 hectare have already been encroached upon. This 2,000 hectare of land, which has been encroached, is a big loss to the Railways. What steps are we taking to retrieve this land from the encroachers? 2,000 hectare of precious land and property have been encroached upon by the people. There is no mention about the steps that have been taken about it by the Railways.

Out of 4.19 lakh hectare of land, another 25,000 hectare of land is laying vacant. Probably, it is lying vacant for the encroachers to come and encroach. What steps are you taking to make sure that 25,000 hectare of land will also not be encroached upon like the 2,000 hectare which have already been encroached.

The condemned rolling-stock is of a very high quantity every year. Are we thinking that a part of this condemned railway stock could be reconditioned and sent to some of our friendly countries who would really benefit? Probably, this gesture would also be realised because we are hardly realising any significant amount out of this.

The productivity parameters have not been mentioned anywhere in the Budget. It is a time that we really come out with the figures. He also mentioned that our average annual wage has gone up from Rs. 45,709 in 1993-94 to Rs. 59,219 in just two years. It is a very

good thing. We are really compensating the workers in an adequate manner. But has the productivity gone up in the Indian Railways during the same period? There is really a need to mention the per employee productivity as we are mentioning the per employee wage rate in the Railways.

18.00 hrs.

Sir, the public relations, education and advertising campaign of the Railways have helped in creating a better image for the Railways. But as a part of the advertising campaign, is it really necessary to publish a full-fledged photograph of the Prime Minister all over the country when we are starting a railway line in one corner of the country or in Bihar? We really publish full-fledged advertisements all over the country and the cost incurred on that probably could be better utilized to offer better facilities to the commuters.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I suppose you have concluded.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Sir, if you say so.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Thank you.

Now, the House stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 11 O'clock.

18.01 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, March 11, 1997/Phalguna 20, 1918 (Saka).
