

approach on this matter. This is a very serious matter concerning the lives of lakhs of workers and their families. Therefore, I would urge upon you to kindly look into it.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : Statutory dues are also not being paid.

- (vi) **Need to sanction the proposal of Government of Maharashtra to increase the amount of Grant for construction of latrines under rural Sanitation Programme.**

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai-North) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, for construction of each latrine under the Rural Sanitation Programme, the Central Government had fixed an amount of rupees 2500 during 1992. It was decided that 40 per cent of the cost of production i.e. rupees 1000/- would be provided to the State Government by the Central Government as grant. During the last five years the cost of labour and building material has increased tremendously. At present the cost of production of each latrine has gone upon 4000 rupees. Therefore the Government of Maharashtra has urged upon the Central Government to increase this amount of grant of 40 per cent i.e. 1000 rupees to 1600 rupees.

The Government of Maharashtra has launched an ambitious scheme to construct 5 lakh latrines per year. Accordingly, during the next four years 20 lakh latrines would be constructed. My submission to the union government is that the increased cost of construction should be accepted and release the amount of grant which is 27.78 crores according to the state government for the latrines constructed till date... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Kanshi Ram ji, you would get a chance tomorrow since once your name was called and at that time you were not present.

- (vii) **Need to Recognize Tamil as a Classical Language**

[English]

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA (Pudukkottai) : Sir, it has been a long pending demand that Tamil language which is as ancient as Greek, Arabic and Persian should be recognized as a classical language by the Government of India.

Way back in 1920 itself, efforts were made and resolutions were passed by the "Karanthai Tamil Sangam" and simultaneously by the then undivided Madras University to declare Tamil as a classical language. Irrespective of the time that has lapsed and the unique qualities that the Tamil Language possesses,

the demand is still not yet realised by the Union Government.

As Greek and Latin reflect the European Community's culture and social values, Tamil is as important to understand the ancient tradition, culture, religion, fundamental and more values and philosophy of Indian Community.

Mr. Suneeth Kumar Chatterjee, the famous linguist has asserted that the Indian Culture is a congregation of various communities among which the major contribution is that of the Dravidian families, in general and Tamil culture, in particular.

Many eminent and distinguished Tamil and Western scholars have stressed the need to recognize Tamil as a classical language.

We, of course, realise that our heritage and traditional values have to be preserved and celebrated, as such things cannot be earned by any nation or community as and whenever it wishes. These could only be inherited over a period of centuries.

I, therefore, request the Union Government to take necessary steps to declare Tamil as a classical language.

12.37 hrs.

THE RAILWAY BUDGET — GENERAL DISCUSSION - 1997-98

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS ON ACCOUNT (RAILWAYS) 1997-98

DEMANDS FOR EXCESS GRANTS — RAILWAYS 1994-95

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

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Now, we will take up further discussion on the Budget (Railways), 1997-98. The time allotted for this discussion is nine hours; and the time already taken is one hour and 21 minutes. So, the balance time is seven hours and 39 minutes.

Shri Sriballav Panigrahi, to continue his speech

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai-North) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, perhaps the discussion goes on the railway budget for the whole night. I want to know whether it would be today or tomorrow, because if it is known then it would be easy to inform the speakers. It is just a suggestion that if previous trend is followed then the

hon. Members would be ready to speak. But, it would be good, if it is decided today itself.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I will let you know later on. I will discuss the matter with the Speaker.

SHRI RAM NAIK : Right, Sir.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : Sir, my suggestion is that instead of continuing during the night, this debate can continue tomorrow and also day after tomorrow - three days.

[Translation]

It continues the whole night which is not correct. We can have the discussion for three days.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : All right, we will discuss it and then I will let you know the decision.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Sir, I raised this point with the Speaker also in the House itself. Tomorrow, the BAC is meeting. It is proposed that on 13th, that is, Thursday, the discussion on UP under rule 184 would be taken up. If that be so, then the General Budget Discussion should not be started before that, because that will mean a break.

So, it is much better that the debates on Railway Budget be spread over today, tomorrow and day after tomorrow instead of spurt of whole night discussion; and after the discussion on UP is taken up on 14th, from Monday next the General Budget can take place. In the meantime, if the time is available, the Bills which are to replace Ordinances can be passed.

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Keeping all these things in mind a decision will be taken.

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Yes, Sir.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh) : Last Thursday when I was speaking on this subject, I was dealing with the inflationary aspect of this Budget. As I pointed out, there has been a freight hike of the order of 23.2 per cent in a brief period of just about eight months. This has also cascading effect on our economy. This freight hike together with five per cent service tax on transporters for movement of goods on road as proposed by the Finance Minister in the General Budget, that too with the impending price hike of petroleum products, will push up inflation rate by at least 3.2 per cent and it will go beyond the double digit mark. It will be about 12 per cent.

In respect of coal alone, there will be an increase of Rs. 45 per tonne. In respect of petrol there has been

an increase of eight paise per litre, on HSD nine paise per litre of Petrol and on cement Rs. 2.44 per bag containing 50 kgs. The Chairman of the SAIL has come out saying how adversely it will affect the steel sector. He said it will cost SAIL Rs. 180 crore more. This will be the effect.

Then I come to the Annual Plan outlay. This time an amount of Rs. 8300 crore is there in the Budget for Plan expenditure. This is exactly the same as in the outgoing year. In the outgoing year it was round about Rs. 8300 crore and in the new financial year commencing from 1st April, about the same amount is proposed. Naturally, in real terms it will be at least 12 per cent less than what it was in the outgoing year. Taking inflation into consideration, it will be less at least by 12 per cent compared with the outgoing year's provision. This is where we are heading to in the Railway sector. Therefore you kindly allow me to give some figures which will indicate whether it is a progressive Budget or a regressive Budget. In very important areas of Railways like railway revenue, it is less this time. In respect of new line construction, of course, there has been some increase in this year's Budget. Last time it was Rs. 283.88 crore. But this time it is raised to Rs. 399.89 crore or roughly Rs. 400 crore. But what is the amount required? According to this price structure or price schedule, at least Rs. 2000 crore is needed to complete the ongoing lines. It may be much more than that. But the modest estimate is Rs. 2000 crore. Some people say it may be Rs. 3000 crore and some experts say Rs. 2000 crore. But even if you take the lower side, it will be Rs. 2000 crore.

We have to take it that if we go on like this whatever projects are on-going, it will take about one century, the whole of the 21st Century for the completion of those projects.

My next point is regarding surveys. Thirty-nine surveys have been proposed in the Budget Speech of the hon. Minister of Railways. It was said by the former Minister of Railways, late Lalit Narain Mishra, 'If there is a will, there is a railway; if there is no will, there is a survey'. If you look at that from that point of view, so many lines are included for survey only to satisfy the hon. Members. They talk of balanced growth in Railways, that they are fighting out regional imbalances and so on by providing money for the North-East. I welcomed this on Thursday. There is a tendency in this year's Budget for regional imbalances to grow. Out of thirty-nine surveys, eight are in only one State, the State to which the hon. Prime Minister belongs and another eight more are there in one other State and for the rest of the country there will be only 22 or 23 surveys. Of course, while replying to the queries of the Pressmen somewhere in Karnataka, the hon. Prime Minister said that all States are being treated equally by the Railways. There was a searching question to the hon. Prime

Minister that in respect of certain States, especially in his own district in his own State, the Budget is overburdened with proposals. I do not know about it. The hon. Minister of Railways will do well to clarify the position. In Karnataka, in one district itself Rs. 130 crore worth projects have been provided.

I do not mind any State getting anything. But I talk of social justice and I say that regional imbalances should not be there. We have a doctrine that in a Cabinet system, all Members of the Cabinet are equal and that the Prime Minister is first among equals. Of course, the Prime Minister is first among equals. Probably the hon. Minister of Railways has kept this in mind when he treated all the other States as equals and treated the States of the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Railways as much more than equals. Have they done justice to this new doctrine? Have they not provided much higher allocation for their States than what they have provided for the other States? I do not know. But certainly these imbalances should be removed and all States should be treated equally.

Of course, in respect of backward States, there is a good provision. Six States have been named as backward : Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and one more State. In respect of these States liberal funds should be provided and new lines should also be drawn up. There are certain proposals for providing rail links. For instance, the Jakhura-Banspani line will open up mining and forest areas in Orissa. Orissa is a paradox. There are abundant natural resources but the people of Orissa are suffering from abject poverty. Naturally, when the question of the new project comes up, these projects should be treated as national projects because these projects will contribute to the economic growth not only of Orissa but to economic growth of the country as a whole. Certain railway lines should be treated as national projects and top priority should be given to them. Whenever there is a new programme, a provision for a new line is made, I think, it will be better if we could say that by a certain date the project would be completed. What I suggest is that there should be a time-bound programme for new lines to be taken up, for the construction of new lines to be taken up and finished.

Now, I come to gauge conversion. This is an important area. Last year, the amount allocated was Rs. 1201.01 crore. It has now been reduced to Rs. 996 crore. It is even less than Rs. 1,000 crore.

As regards doubling, last year Rs. 206.36 crore was allotted, but this year it has been reduced to Rs. 178.01 crore. Let us come to computerisation. I need not highlight the importance of computerisations in these days. Last year Rs. 62.58 crore was allotted, but this year the allocation has been reduced to Rs. 35 crore which is less than fifty per cent.

Last year, the allocation for rolling stock was Rs. 2020.91 crore, but this year it has been shamelessly reduced to Rs. 1208.29 crore. After the presentation of the Railway Budget on the 26th February, just see how many accidents, robberies, dacoities and violent incidents have taken place. All these have happened within such a short period of two weeks. This should not be brushed aside and should not be taken lightly. A serious note of all these things should be taken.

For signalling and telecommunication also, this year the provision is less. The fares are going up, but the passenger amenities are going down. Last year, the provision for passenger amenities was Rs. 103.59 and this year it has come down to Rs. 80 crore. Like this, in several important areas the provision is less. As I told you, whatever be the plan outlay, in real terms the provision is less.

Look at the growth rate. We have posed a growth rate of 7.2 per cent. Yesterday I was reading a newspaper in which it was reported that hon. Minister of Finance, Chidambaramji, has said that by the end of the century, the economic growth rate of our country would be around eight per cent and the industrial growth would be twelve per cent. Keeping this in view, should the Railways not plan their programmes accordingly? Already there is a big gap between the requirement and the real situation. Further, this gap will only widen very fast because their growth rate is only six per cent to seven per cent.

As regards the goods traffic, year before last, they had transported 390 million tonnes of goods, last year they had transported 410 million tonnes and this year they have proposed to transport 433 million tonnes of goods. What is the growth rate? It is hardly five per cent, whereas the annual industrial growth rate is twelve per cent and the overall economic growth rate is seven per cent to eight per cent.

Moreover, 33 per cent of the total coaches and wagons are over-aged. They cannot be used. The electrification of railway lines is only nineteen per cent. So, look at the present situation. We are having a miserable situation today in different areas of functioning of Railways.

The National Transport Committee recommended for 72-73 per cent of the total goods and passenger traffic to be carried or to be borne by the Railways. On the other day, I said that it is only 20 per cent in respect of passenger traffic. Sixty per cent of the goods traffic is going to the road sector. Further, it would go up. By the end of the century, 63 per cent to 67 per cent would go to the road sector (goods traffic). If the Railways can carry 72 per cent of the goods traffic, then another Rs. 16000 crore would be saved. Shri Basudeb Acharia will bear me out when I say that, if the Railways can take care of the whole coal movement that is being offered

[Shri Sriballav Panigrahi]

by the Coal India Limited, they can earn another Rs. 5,000-6,000 crore.

Who is now to be blamed? So, if you consider this Budget from all these angles, I would say that it is unimaginative, it is uninspiring, it is not commensurate with the growth that we are having; and much more has got to be done about it.

There were so many committees that were appointed earlier which have made indepth studies about the requirements of our future, about the condition that the Railways is facing today and also about what should be done regarding this. Railways had a Corporate Plan for a 15 year period, that is, from 1980 to 1995. Railways also had umpteen Committees Dr. M.N. Nanjundappa Committee, Prakash Tandon Committee, Poul Committee. These Committees have also given their recommendations, as the National Transport Policy Committee has given. What has happened to the recommendations of all these Committees? They are now lying in cold storage. There is no dearth of such studies, but there is a dearth of will power. Just taking populist measures will not help; a time has come now when there has got to be a national consensus about our transport sector.

I would like to quote from a World Bank report of 1995 entitled 'India - Transport Sector - long-term issue', authored by Robert Bernal, which says :

"Capacity constraint of the transport system together with that of the power sector, has a far greater constraint on overall economic growth of India."

This is a discussion on the Railway Budget and I need not say anything about power situation. Regarding power shortage, what has been the plight of the people in Delhi which is the Union's Capital, during the winter days?

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh) : The only point that you are missing out is that these are the 'accumulated problems' of the last so many years and not of the last seven months.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : I will come to that. I do not think that it has happened overnight. I am the last man to say that it has happened overnight. But I analysed the other day, with facts and figures, how things have deteriorated. Functioning of the Railways has deteriorated over the period of last seven or eight months. For the information of the hon. Member from the CPI(M) Bench, I would say that when they took over the Office, the rate of inflation was 4.4 per cent. What is it today? It is around eight per cent. What will it be after two or three months? It would be around 12

per cent. Railway accidents have also increased nowadays.

When the General Budget was presented, what was the instant reaction of our CPI(M) friends. They have all welcomed it. But today, their General-Secretary, the most powerful person, Shri Surjeet has said that it is an elitist Budget. The other day, the West Bengal Chief Minister, and Shri Somnath Chatterjee and others were full of praise for it.

SHRI ANIL BASU : We have said it clearly. We would support all the positive steps and we would oppose all the negative aspects.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : I will come to all 'positive things.'

I would give my suggestion on how the Railways can mobilise resources. We should not have just an *ad hoc* plan to appease a few sections of the population. We are not talking about the common passengers, but about the rate of inflation that is there. It will not spare the common man, it will not spare any ordinary passenger even those who have not seen a train. All thus would be affected by that.

So, a realistic approach is called for today. I shall come to the Demands for Grants, I would be doing injustice to my State which is backward and to the area that I represent in Parliament, if I do not mention its genuine demands and if I do not request the Government to consider them.

13.00 hrs.

Before that, as I have suggested, we should think as to what should be done about mobilising bounds. I am not going into the figures as to how many coaches or wagons we need to add and also about other things. As I said, several studies have been conducted and a minimum sum of Rs. 20,000 crore is needed for completion of the on-going projects with another minimum sum of about Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 50,000 crore for electrification and gauge conversion and other things.

I have to thank the hon. Minister for one thing, that is, with his efforts, there has been an increase in the budgetary support this year. At one point of time, it was 75 per cent. Then, it came down to a very small figure of 16 per cent and this year, it is raised to 21 per cent. I have come across a news item about the Ninth Plan.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Shri Panigrahi, you may continue after the Lunch Hour.

13.03 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till
Fourteen of the Clock.*