

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please sit down.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please sit down first. I will allow you thereafter.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr. Hazarika may please speak now.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Prof. Kurien, you may please speak now.

(Interruptions)

PROF. P.G. KURIEN: Sir, I would like to submit that it is not just a law and order problem in Kerala. There the freedom of functioning of political parties is at stake. ... (Interruptions) Sir, those hon. Members can react after I make my submission. I have no objection to that. ... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Mr. K. Suresh, please do not display the paper.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record.

(Interruptions)\*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Hon. Members, still ten minutes are left. You please utilise them for Zero Hour.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned till 2 p.m.

12.50 hrs.

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

14.07 hrs.

[English]

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Seven Minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.*

(MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *In the Chair*)

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (CALCUTTA SOUTH): Sir, the Railway Minister is not present here ... (Interruptions)

[Translations]

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA (KANPUR): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the discussion on the Rail Budget is likely to start but the Railway Minister is not present here.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He is a 'petty' Minister.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: One Minute, please listen to me. The Railway Minister has gone somewhere to do some work with the permission of the Speaker. He will be back very soon.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: He has gone to have his food.

(Interruptions)

[English]

14.09 hrs.

#### RAILWAY BUDGET 1997-98

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

#### DEMANDS FOR EXCESS GRANTS (RAILWAYS) 1994-95

#### DEMANDS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY GRANTS (RAILWAYS) 1996-97

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House will now take up Item Nos. 5 to 8 together on Railway Budget. The time allotted for this is nine hours.

Motion moved:

"That the respective sums not exceeding the amounts shown in the third column of the Order Paper be granted to the President of India out of the Consolidated Fund of India, on account, for or towards defraying the charges during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1998, in respect of the heads of Demands entered in the second column thereof against Demand Nos. 1 to 16"

*Demands for Grants on Account (Railways) for 1997-98 submitted to the Vote of the Lok Sabha.*

No. of Demand	Name of Demand	Amount of Demand for Grants on Account submitted to the Vote of the House
1	2	3
1.	Railway Board	6,00,76,000
2.	Miscellaneous Expenditure (General)	28,23,30,000

\*Not recorded.

1	2	3
3.	General Superintendence and Services on Railways	201,62,50,000
4.	Repairs & Maintenance of Permanent Way & Works	392,87,93,000
5.	Repairs & Maintenance of Motive Power	222,81,85,000
6.	Repairs & Maintenance of Carriages and Wagons	405,15,66,000
7.	Repairs & Maintenance of Plant and Equipment	209,22,22,000
8.	Operating Expenses-Rolling Stock & Equipment	319,90,98,000
9.	Operating Expenses-Traffic	1324,39,10,000
10.	Operating Expenses-Fuel	744,69,11,000
11.	Staff Welfare & Amenities	147,21,59,000
12.	Miscellaneous Working Expenses	182,75,71,000
13.	Provident Fund, Pension and other retirement benefits	418,84,00,000
14.	Appropriation to Funds	1177,66,67,000
15.	Divident to General Revenues, Repayment of Loans taken from General Revenues and Amortization of Over-Capitalization	4,28,11,000
16.	Assets-Acquisition, Construction and Replacement	
	Revenue	7,50,00,000
	<i>Other Expenditure</i>	
	Capital	1608,67,21,000
	Railway Funds	682,59,67,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8084,46,37,000</b>

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That the respective supplementary sums not exceeding the amounts shown in the third column of the Order Paper be granted to the President of India out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1997, in respect of the heads of Demands entered in the second column thereof against Demand Nos. 1 to 4, 6 to 8, 11, 13 and 16."

*Supplementary Demands for Grants (Railways) for 1996-97 submitted to the vote of the Lok Sabha.*

No. of Demand	Name of Demand	Amount of Demand for Grants submitted to the Vote of the House (in Rs.)
1	2	3
1.	Railway Board	1,16,30,000
2.	Miscellaneous Expenditure (General)	3,45,39,000
3.	General Superintendence and Services on Railways	22,61,44,000
4.	Repairs & Maintenance of Permanent Way & Works	56,35,56,000
6.	Repairs & Maintenance of Carriages and Wagons	60,16,39,000
7.	Repairs & Maintenance of Plant and Equipment	27,95,89,000
8.	Operating Expenses-Rolling Stock & Equipment	79,68,35,000
11.	Staff Welfare & Amenities	8,66,97,000
13.	Provident Fund, Pension and other retirement benefits	135,54,68,000
16.	Assets-Acquisition, Construction and Replacement	
	Revenue	
	<i>Other Expenditure</i>	
	Capital	1,000
	Railway Funds	304,73,32,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>700,34,30,000</b>

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That the respective excess sums not exceeding the amounts shown in the third column of the Order Paper be granted to the President of India out of the Consolidated Fund of India to make good the excess on the respective grants during the year ended on the 31st day of March, 1995, in respect of the following Demands entered in the second column thereof.

Demands Nos. 8, 14 & 16".

*Demands for Excess Grants (Railways) for  
1994-95 submitted to the Vote of the Lok Sabha*

No. of Demand	Name of Demand	Amount of Demand for submitted to the Vote of the House
1	2	3
8.	Operating Expenses-Rolling Stock & Equipment	1,57,81,798
14.	Appropriation to Funds	366,39,46,659
16.	Assets-Acquisition, Construction and Replacement	
	<i>Other Expenditure</i>	23,53,27,736
	Capital	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>391,50,56,193</b>

[Translation]

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN (MUMBAI-NORTH EAST): Mr. Deputy Speaker, sir, today we are going to start discussion on the Rail Budget but the Railway Minister is conspicuous by his absent. I have got no objection thereto for if the Engine Driver is not available but the Guard is, we can have the discussion in the presence of the Minister of State also.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Assistant Driver is available.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Though his railway budget was to be discussed from Monday and about 72 hours...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Not from the last Monday but from the next Monday.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I am standing on the platform of Parliament....

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: When train comes late, Budget also comes late.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: But there is nothing in it to feel surprised because when the printing is delayed by 48 hours, discussion is bound to delay by 72 hours. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, sometimes coming to this House seems as if we are going to attend a hearing in the court where it is only 5.00 P.M. in evening we are told that the hearing has been postponed for tomorrow. This is also something like that. Now I am gradually starting this discussion from Monday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, sir, the Indian Railways is one of the biggest public undertakings in India and it is also the biggest job providing organisation in our country. In his speech, the Railway Minister has time and again made references the problems and difficulties and resource crunch being faced by the Railways. He has made an attempt to place his faults on the Planning Commission

and Ministry of Finance. It is regretted that no where in his speech he has shown any determination meet the challenges being faced by the Railways and turn them into opportunities. Today the Indian Railways are faced with seven major challenges. The first challenge is to convert the Railways into commercial and public welfare organization. Though we discuss the Railway Budget every year but we never discuss as to what should be the role of Railways in our national transport policy. We do not discuss as to what contribution can be made by the Railways in this respect-this is the second challenge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, sir, the third Challenge is as to what are the responsibilities and role of the railways in our national development? The fourth challenge is as to how we can make our financial and management efficient? The fifth challenge is in respect of energy. The railways are primarily using three kinds of energies i.e. power, diesel and coal. There should be proper and just availability of these three assets for Railways so that it can perform its' role perfectly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker sir, As I have said at the beginning that the Railways are the target job providing organisation and the Minister of Railways had very proudly affirmed this fact that day. This is quite true that 40 per cent of the total Government employees in India are engaged in the Railways. There are 16 lakh employees in the Railways. One crore and ten lakh passengers travel every day by the rails. If we just do a little calculation, it comes to one employee serving to seven passengers out of these 110 lakh passengers, nearly 55 lakh passengers one from Bombay alone. I don't remember the exact number of employees in Bombay but so far as can I guess, there are 2 1/2 to 3 lakh employees in Bombay. If this number is deducted then there remains 13 lakh employees for the rest of the 55 lakh passengers. If passengers are to be counted, one employees is serving four passengers. Optimum utilisation of the potential of these 16 lakh employees is the sixth challenge for the Railway.

Many a time during his speech, the Railway Minister dwelt on the need of the construction of more railway links. What are basis for construction of the Railway lines? Whether the Railway lines should be constructed under the national transport policy or they should be constructed under the policy of national development? Whether the rail lines should be constructed to make the railway convenient for public or it should be constructed on political considerations? What should be the basis of their constructional extension and doubling? This is the seventh challenge which I was thinking of before the start of discussion on Railway Budget. But unfortunately, these challenges have not been referred to at all in the Railway Budget. I am not sure whether the Railway Minister ever thinks of these challenges? The Rail Budget is quite silent over these needs.

The Railways Minister, while delivering his speech on the Railway Budget, said on the outset that they want to the Railways not only as a commercial organization but

[Shri Pramod Mahajan]

also as an effective welfare organization for development of backward areas.

I want to relate these lines of the Railway Minister with the lines mentioned in the Railways ninth Five Year Plan which is as follows-

[English]

"The imperative of striking balance between Railway's dual role, as a public utility service on onehand and commercial enterprise to be run on the sound business principles on other hand, constitutes the major challenge of investment planning."

[Translation]

I don't find the above lines read out by the Railway Minister and the lines mentioned in the railway's 9th Plan or contradictory. The Railway Minister has not opposed the point the Railways should also work like a commercial organization. I read out his sentence again that, "the railway should function not only like a commercial organization..." He said that the Railways should confine themselves not only to the commercial activities. He further said that the "Railways should also serve like a public welfare organization..." It means, he wants Railways to render their services like a commercial organisation as well as a public welfare organization. I don't consider it as contradictory. Rather I consider it as supplementary of each other. I also agree with his view that the Railways should not function like a commercial organisation only but also like a public welfare organisation. The use these two roles of the Railways are not contradictory but it has raised one question in my mind and that is about the Railways earnings. We should not allow the Railways to become only a profit making commercial organization. But, at the same time, we should also not allow the Railways to become a bankrupt, for if they become bankrupt, how can they play their public welfare role? They will not be able to render their public welfare services. Therefore, we can not even dream of steering railways towards bankruptcy or they have to play this vital role, rather we are required to maintain a proper balance as has been said in the Railways 9th Five Year Plan between their two roles as a Commercial organisation and as a public welfare organisation. Only then the Railways can deliver goods in the field of commercial activities and can use the profit earned therefrom for welfare of the backward class people and extend their services to the people living in the farflung areas which are yet beyond the reach of the Railways. But after going through the Budget, I feel as if the Railways are no more like a strong giant commercial organization. It would be a haste to term them as bankrupt. But it seems to me as if the Railways are heading only in that direction. When I make an assesment of the economic condition of the railways on the basis of your data, I find that the conditions of the Railways is deteriorating day-by-day. Time is very short and other members of my party also want to speak on this subject, therefore, I will not cite all the examples but after going through the whole Budget, it appears that

the economic condition of the railways is deteriorating day-by-day. Due to time constraint, I will raise only two points. It is the touchstone, i.e. the relationship between investment made by you and profit earned therefrom; of an organization which plays important role in its' functioning. The amount of money seved from the commercial transaction can be used for expansion of the Railway services. But if you start spending excessively just in order to earn more profit, it is not likely to fetch you the desired results. It does not create a situation for your organization to move ahead. If it is said in the language of Railways then it will be said as to what is the operating ratio of Railways? Till now I was elaborating it in Hindi.

[English]

What is the operating ratio of Railways?

[Translation]

What is happening to it day-by-day. I would not go to very old days. But the operating ratio of railways which should have gone down during the last three years has actually increased from 86.3 to 91.4. It means that the railways are spending Rs. 91.4 in order to earn Rs. 100 and they are able to save only a petty amount of Rs. 8.60 for their developmental work. When we look at the last 20 years record, we find that

[English]

The operating ratio has come up from 45 percent to 91.4 percent.

[Translation]

Therefore, sometime, I feel that in case this ratio goes up beyond 100 percent then you will have to remove the railway lines instead of laying them. But no serious concern has been expressed by the Railways Minister over this rise in his Budget speech.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Fooding will also require some expenditure.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV (PATNA): Give some suggestions about the remedial measures also. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Everything was going smoothly, now, what has caused you irritation.

SHRI RAM NAIK (MUMBAI-NORTH): No, he is not looking irritated, his face itself is like that.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Look at the criterion adopted by the railways to run this organisation the percentage of net revenue to the capital at large, which should come down, is increasing and the things which should have gone up, have decreased from 12.2 percent to 8.9 percent. Now the situation is that we are earning Rs. 9.00 after investing Rs. 100 and if the Government, which is borrowing loans from market at the interest rate of 13.85 percent, charges only 8.9 percent interest thereon, very soon it will be in the state of bankruptcy. If our trains



run with this much speed, very soon the Railways will be reaching in the state of bankruptcy.

Our railways' Minister is a great manipulator for him the lacunas in railways are just nothing. This manipulation is not at all less than that of the Finance Minister. Had he not played the trick, probably these figures would have been much higher.

Now look at the depreciation fund. How much money has been kept for this purpose. At least you have to keep some depreciation fund for smooth functioning of Railways. This year you have kept only Rs. 2000 crores under the depreciation fund against the sum of Rs. 2215 crores of the last year whereas this amount should have gone up in view of the increase in the railway's revenue from 14 per cent to 16 per cent as every equipment has some life period. This year you should have made a provision of at least Rs. 4400 crores for depreciation fund but you have reduced it to Rs. 2000 crores from the last year's amount of Rs. 2115 crore. No doubt this will fulfil the budgetary figure on paper but the time will come when this regular process will end. Then you will realise the importance of this budgetary provision. You will feel that repairs could have solved the purpose and need for purchasing new machines would not felt.

There is an other anomaly. You are giving pension to the retired personnel of railways. Now here in the world the allocation for pension is reduced and even if it is reduced, it has got many sound reasons behind it. This time you have reduced the pension appropriation from Rs. 2700 crore to Rs. 2200 crore which means the reduction of Rs. 500 crore. Do you want to reduce the amount of pension ... (Interruptions) I am not politically biased while saying these things. Or else I would have said that your intentions are not good and you intend to do so. Every year people retires from railways and their number is likely to increase in the future. At the same time, average age of the people is also increasing in our country and as a result there of they are likely to draw their pension for a longer period. If you do not remove these anomalies, your financial condition is bound to deteriorate.

In the the annual plan of railways, you have said very forcefully that your requirement is of the order of Rs. 11000 crore but the Planning Commission said that it was beyond their reach and they can afford only Rs. 8,300 crore for the purpose. Last year, the railways requirement was Rs. 8130 crore for their annual plan. This year you have got Rs. 8300 crores which means an increase of Rs. 170 crore only. Let us have an overall view in this regard. Last year the rate of inflation varied between 5 to 7 per cent. From that point of view, your amount has not been increased by Rs. 170 crore rather it has been reduced by Rs. 500 crore. Apparently it has increased but practically the amount has decreased-with this much little amount what can you do?

Now I would sum up your position sentence by sentence. For rolling stock, you have provided only Rs. 1200 crores against the last year's provision of

Rs. 2020 crores i.e. you have reduced the amount by Rs. 812 crores.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know that the hon. Minister is going to meet this deficit by drawing Rs. 300 crore from the Finance Corporation of Indian Railways. As far as this corporation is concerned, I will speak on it later. But mainly you have reduced Rs. 800 crore in the original budget. Another point is that you have said to increase the railway facilities for passengers. You have dwelt on length on this score in your Budget speech but when I read out your speech, I found to dismay that you have earmarked only Rs. 80 crores for this purpose against the last year's Rs. 103 crores. How can you increase the railways facilities for passengers by decreasing the allocation we have to see as to what magic or miracle Chidambaram ji or Paswan ji is going to perform? You have decided to undertake the broadgauge conversion of the tracks. For this purpose, you had provided Rs. 1021 crore last year but this year you have given Rs. 996 crore only. You have reduced Rs. 25 crore this time then how do you propose to undertake this conversion work?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, a sum of Rs. 206 crore was allocated last year for the doubling of railway lines but this time it has been reduced to Rs. 178 crore. The allocation has been reduced by Rs. 28 crore. How will you undertake this work? For signalling, you had provided Rs. 252 crore last year whereas this year you have allocated Rs. 201 crore only. Signalling is linked with the railway's safety but instead of increasing this amount you have reduced the same by Rs. 50 crore. How do you intend to maintain the signalling system by reducing the amount therefor? If you do not maintain your signalling system properly, the chances of train collision will remain and it is something very unfortunate. I have read in your budget speech that you want to lay much stress on the need of computerisation and you want to link the railway stations with one another through computerisation. For this purpose, last year a sum of Rs. 62 crore and 58 lakh were allocated which has been reduced to Rs. 35 crore this year. This way you have reduced Rs. 27 crore and 56 lakh this year against the allocation of last year. No body is going to give us money for this work. No body is going to give us computers free of cost. You have allocated just half of the amount you spent last year then how do you want to make computerisation possible?

SHRI ILLIYAS AZMI (SHAHABAD): Computer has become cheaper now.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: That is correct and so you should keep on supporting me.

You have made a good attempt to save the railways from its worst financial condition. I do not deny it. But the attempt have been made in a wrong way. That is not the proper way to tide over the problem. This is the need of the hour that we should save the railways from going further on the path of the financial disaster. But so far we have been following the same old and obsolete method to solve the financial problem of railways. I do not want to blame

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only Shri Paswan ji for this old method rather every Railway Minister in the past has followed the same method for solving the financial problem of railways. No new idea comes either in the minds of the Railway Minister or the Ministry of Railways to find a new way out for this purpose. All of them have been doing the same old job of increasing the freight charges over the years. This year so far you have hiked freight charges by 12 1/2 per cent. Earlier the Government used to increase these charges by 10 to 12 per cent once in a year but the speciality of the United Front Government is that they have hiked the freight charges twice in a year. Seven months ago you have increased the freight charges by 10 per cent. Might be that people have forgotten it but the officials have not. Could be that the hon. Minister has forgotten it but we have not. Earlier you had increased it by 10 per cent but this time you have increased it by 12 1/2 per cent. This way if we calculate then you have hiked it once 10 per cent on 100 and then 12 1/2 per cent on 110 which means the overall increase is 23.2 per cent a year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has said that he did not increase the freight charges on essential commodities. Those have been left aside. We are very grateful to him. I want to let you know that the list of these essential commodities is something like the list of our Constitution. Except for here and there there have been made no substantial changes in this list. The Railway Minister spoke rather in a very slow voice that with great pain, he is increasing the freight charges by 12 1/2 per cent but leaving aside the essential commodities. These commodities are the same which were last year. Yesterday, I was going through the speech of the Railway Minister which he has delivered in the Press Conference held yesterday. The Commodities which has been left aside from the freight hike, are not adequately carried by you. Last year, you do not carry that much quantity of foodgrains which you should have carried. This does not benefit the people engaged in the food-grain transaction. It is O.K. that essential commodities are very important for life. We had got exporters. They said that they do not manufacture the essential commodities but their goods have become costly by 23 per cent with the hike in freight charges. They say that they are exporters and earning foreign exchange but with the rise in freight charges, their goods will sell costly by 25 per cent in foreign countries. Now there is no way out left for them. It is always said that common man is usually concerned with essential commodities—this is partially true but not fully. When you increase the freight rates, a cycle of price rise emerges. For example, take coal. No body eats coal but it is used in Chulha as well as in power stations. When freight charges on coal will increase then resultantly it will be an increase on power also. Many people may not agree to this point. Even my colleagues may not agree. Increase in the rail fare does affect a passenger directly but when freight charges are increased it also affects every person in this or that way. The poor person who travels in trains suffers double loss. Alongwith the increase in rail fare, he has to bear the increased freight

charges also. Every time it is said that passengers have been exempted from any increase but increase in the freight charges results in price rise. You do not take this point into account. Generally it is considered that when freight charges are increased by 10 to 12 per cent, the rate of inflation also increases by 1 per cent or 1 1/4 per cent. It means you are causing the passengers to suffer double loss and thus allowing the inflation to increase by 2 1/4 per cent to 2 1/2 per cent annually. There is another aspect in this regard which you must know. Even if we agree for a moment that this increase is unavoidable then also there should be a limit for everything. If you increase the freight charges beyond a certain limit then it is likely to cause you loss in instead of profit. Have you ever observed that goods carrying capacity of the railways has decreased during the last 40 years. In 1951, goods carrying capacity of the railways was 89 per cent, whereas 80 per cent passengers used to travel in the trains but in 1997 the goods carrying capacity of the railways has come down to 46 per cent and our trains are carrying only 20 per cent passengers. Different routes and vehicles have decreased your capacity. Now if you do not take this factor into account, then your goods capacity is not likely to increase inspite of the maximum increase in the freight charges. We also want that maximum quantity of goods should be transported by trains for 80-82 per cent petrol is consumed by the trucks and trains are taking only 9 per cent petrol and they are also causing less pollution. Trains capable of carrying the goods to far distant areas within the shortest possible time. Trains also do not stand here and there during their journey to their destination. In spite of these facts, people still prefer trucks for their use which means either you are very costly or you have not got that much capacity. This is the reason why people prefer trucks while sending their goods from one place to another, say from Mumbai to Calcutta. If you do not understand the importance of railways, it will become bankrupt.

You did not touch this point in your budget speech. Increase in freight charges will increase inflation. You should contain the rise. But unless you increase your goods carrying capacity, the increase in freight charges is not likely to fetch you any benefit. This is two crore tonne per year. Last year it was 39 lakh. This time it is 41 lakh. This is not a development. Like the lifetime of a man increases, it is also increasing. When a person is 17 or 18, his moustaches become evident.

[English]

It is not a development.

[Translation]

In this natural process, when our population has increased it has also increased the number of our trains. Every year you have been trying to earn Rs. one crore or two crore more by increasing the freight charges by 10 per cent or 15 per cent.

[English]

Have you ever thought of quantum jump?

[*Translation*]

No body will mind if you increased the charges after doing something for the people. There is no proper planning for goods carrying. Who will give you money? You increase your capacity. Have you ever made any effort to find out any new source for increasing your income? I do not think so. How will the Planning Commission or Finance Ministry will mobilise funds every time? Already you are having a capital of Rs. 22 thousand crore. You are paying dividend thereon. I do not know as to who has termed it 'dividend'. This is interest. You are paying interest on your debt. How can you say it is dividend. In my opinion we have to sit together with the Union Government to discuss these points.

Your Approach paper says-

[*English*]

"The State shall provide adequate assistance to enable the Railways to carry the social burden as a public utility service."

[*Translation*]

Apart from the railways, part of its social burden has to be borne by the nation as well. If that is not shared by the nation, the railways alone are not capable of bearing the same. Unfortunately, we consider the Railways as an infrastructure but the name of Railways has been mentioned nowhere in the Indian Infrastructure Report submitted by the Railways. They do not consider the Railways as an infrastructure. In case the Infrastructure Report of the Union Government does not consider the Railways as an infrastructure, centre is not likely to release any amount of money for such an infrastructure. And contrary to this, if this is regarded as social burden of public utility service, no doubt it will be extended every possible financial help. But since that is not currently available, it is irrelevant to talk about that whether a separate Budget for Railways has got some relevance or not? Why should there be a separate Budget for Railways? If you want to seek assistance everytime from Ministry of Finance, then handover this Ministry to Finance Ministry also. He will read it out. Two times Budget presentation and two times discussion thereon is no more required. If you cannot mobilise your resources then there is no justification of presenting the railway budget that too just for reading out the Budget speech. If you want to take everything from Centre, why should there be any need for a separate Railway Budget? You started your BOLT Scheme. You yourself said in your speech that it is disappointing as the same is yielding you no profit. I will not blame you. But why is it disappointing? Why this BOLT Scheme is not working successfully? It is successful in some parts but elsewhere it is a failure. I do not know as to what are you providing under this scheme. Might be you are conducting some study in respect of the Railways. Though it has turned out to be a failure but inspite this you are doing nothing in this regard.

The Konkan railways got the money. Why? Because while extending your share for the project you did ask them to give their own share and they gave it because it was their own project, and belonged to their own state. But if you ask the Keralite people to give money for constructing a culvert in Bihar, I do not think that they will take any interest in such a outside project. But if you ask the people of Bihar to give money for some specific project to be undertaken in their own state, they will certainly take interest therein.

This is in no way concerned with the Railways, I am just illustrating an example. The Maharashtra Government wanted to construct a big dam on the river Krishna for which they went to the market. They were having requirement of Rs. 700 crore and they got it within three days. People mobilised the monney. The people thought that they were likely to get the benefit of the dam as they were living near the river Krishna and, therefore, they participated in mobilisation of the fund. You are not getting the BOLT system for execution of the specific projects of the railways.

'Own Your Wagon' Scheme has got some success. If we extend it, we will certainly achieve more success under this scheme. This can save our amount of mobile stock which can be invested somewhere else.

Much area of the land is lying unused under the possession of railways. Do you ever think that it can be commercially utilised? There is a large number of railway stations in our country which are the source of our income. Do not sell that land right now. Keep that under your possession. ...(*Interruptions*). Start it from the metropolitan cities. I think there are 30 to 40 stations in Mumbai. One crore and ten lakh people travel every day in Mumbai which means we are selling one crore and 10 lakh tickets daily. This way, we are selling 365 crore tickets in a year. Like a commercial organisation, you should think about publishing advertisements on railway tickets. This way we can earn revenue which can be invested for public welfare. But, unfortunately, it seems that we are having no such plans. You have placed the entire burden on the Indian Railways Financial Corporation. On the evening of the Railway Budget, the President, Rail Board, held a meeting with the journalists where he said the following lines:

[*English*]

"We are in a position of raising large funds. But we have to be very careful about debt trap and bankruptcy."

They have themselves admitted it. They will get money when Government is supporting them. Anybody can give them money. They can raise money even from markets when private sector can get money, the Government can also get money. But have you ever thought that whatever amount you are investing in Railway Finance Corporation. This corporation has to refund that amount too? It is not a donating account. It is a professional organisation. If it has to be done, this fact will have to be taken into account that to what extent the percentage of money to be spent by Railway Finance Corporation in making refund has

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increased. 5 to 10 year back around 1987 this percentage was 0.42 while today it has reached 8.7. It is the third biggest head. Biggest head pertains to the salaries of employees. Fuel comes on second place. Under the third expenditure head comes repayment to the Railway Finance Corporation. If railway suffers losses, it is profit to Railway Finance Corporation. Now we exaggerate this aspect that Railway Finance Corporation of India is earning profit. Why it will not earn profit when Railway suffers losses. You are telling that you have received much in smaller pot. When big plate become empty, it will definitely come into smaller pot. This relationship between smaller pot and big plate can be termed as son has taken loan from his father and father says that my son is earning a lot now-a-days. It does not make any sense because this organisation has also to refund money in the market.

Adopt some harsh measures, by reducing your expenditure. Before your coming, I said that one employee serves four passengers, he serves well, we are satisfied with his service, it is going well. Now find out some way for reducing railway expenditure. You run rails, but you also look after sanitation job, you provide catering services and you will have to run even hotel outside. Why? Let other agencies that. It does not obstruct employment? I think, that time has come in India when all politicians must understand that it will not obstruct employment and we will make the whole country bankrupt if we indulge in such wrong tendency of employment. It will not obstruct employment. You run rails, manufacture rails, give signals, shift from one place to another place ...*(Interruptions)*.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (BARH): What is the fault of Shri Paswan in this matter.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN (MUMBAI-NORTH-EAST): It is his concern when he will reply. Here, I am not inviting interruption... ...*(Interruptions)*.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): We have given law and order subject to the States, now what is happening there.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (BARH): You are referring to Bihar.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: No, it is not only Bihar, it includes Maharashtra also.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN (MUMBAI-NORTH EAST): I thought that I was speaking on some other subject.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: I did not refer you.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I have come in between two Biharis. Even one is enough for us to bear.

I was saying that you run railways, handover this work to someone else, it will reduce your workload. You are going to wrong direction. There are harsh words and are

not good for politics. You have created six new zones, people became happy. Whosoever speak after me, will ask for more new zones. Provision of 2000 crore rupees per zone has been made.

*(English)*

We are living in the age of information technology.

*(Translation)*

Someone can run railways while sitting in Rail Bhawan. Computerisation has arrived. People are using Internet to run their services. I am not delivering any speech on science. Shri Chidambaramji knows more. That is why he told this on that day. But after 10 year a person will not require to come out of his house, *(English)* he could order everything from his personal computer.

*(Translation)*

Now in such a situation new buildings, new people, new arrangement. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Would you kindly yield for a minute ?

Pramodji, I will take only one minute. Whatever you have said is quite right. We want to learn something from you. Now many States were there in the country previously and what is their number today. Whether any building for their capital has been constructed or not? In the same way how many districts were there in the country previously and what is their number today. Any building in the name of that district has been constructed or not. Similarly what was the number of blocks previously and what is the number thereof today. What was the number of police station previously and what is their number today. What was the criteria of their formation. When same criteria existed there, in the sameway some criteria has also been fixed in respect of railway created. It was decided in the Committee constituted after 1966 that when index crosses 125 mark a new zone would be created, zone was created in 1955, in 1956 and in 1958 and in 1966. After that a Committee was constituted. Committee conducted that by 1966 four zones should be created. Then 1984 came. At that time zone was created as per prevailing index. All this expenditure is not for palace. It is being incurred for railway zone only. On the one hand you say that there should be decentralization of power and on the other hand the power is centralized in one particular Ministry.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: There is no need to learn from me. I myself want to learn.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: We are not teaching you but you can teach us.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: You can teach. You have raised the issue having two main points while replaying please clarify when was the index of railway zone prepared.

It is not necessary that with the when changes will come in change of information technology your index for



creation of a new zone should remain the same. There is no need for it. In those days when I used to come to Delhi from Mumbai and I return back, I used to send my message through STD that please send me return ticket. I am talking about air travelling. Now the whole work is done from here itself through computer within a minute. You can take ticket for hundred places within a minute. I am not talking about railways only. I am talking about the whole nation. You are creating new zone by putting a burden of 2000 crore rupees. This burden is ultimately to be borne by the public. Whether you agree with it or not is a different thing.

May be that after me the people belonging to my party speak and demand for more zones. But I am not speaking from regional and party's point of view. I am giving my assessment regarding railway as it appears to me. You cite some example of economy. I daily go through newspaper Advertisements appear thereon. Sometimes advertisements of Kerala appear that one train is being introduced from there and sometimes the train is introduced from here. Some photographs are seen in the newspaper. One or two photographs are common, some faces are new. Now you will say what difference does one or two thousand crore rupees make? But I want that Railway Minister should cite an example of economy not only this, it will move further also. Once started by our ex-minister-now it will continue. You will ask whether photographs were not published previously. What happened if published even today. I want to ask whether there is no scope of economy in your Budget. We have to reduce debt, it also requires economy.

You have taken two good steps. The whole country will welcome it. It is correct that railway track also has to be expanded. You have emphasised the need of railway track expansion-one for Poorvanchal and another for Jammu and Kashmir. From the commercial point of view these tracks may not be viable but these are essential from national integrity and security point of view.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: For Andaman also.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: You will ask for fly-overs. I think you donot have any long tern plan regarding railway track expansion. Who is Railway Minister, who is Prime Minister, who asks for expansion, who quarrels for it-how railway expansion is possible in such way. There is no such master-plan for Railway in our country so as to make railway expansion as per our need in the coming 15-20 years. Whether this master plan exist or not but once we must have discussion in this regard.

Many years ago Sharad Joshi wrote a poem on Post Office. He said that it was a good happening that Britishers introduced postal system before leaving our country. If they would not have introduced, we had introduced this system here and our post office would have been Indian Post Officers. Mamataji would you kindly excuse me if I quote one sentence:

"Congress won their one election on this assurance that they are going to open post office and in second five year plan post offices would have been opened in Mumbai, Chennai, Calcutta and Delhi and post offices continue to be opened as their demand comes."

It is not the way of opening post offices. You should have some scientific method with regard to survey, modernisation gauge-conversion as well as introducing a new train. All this must have a judicious bare. It should not be done on mercy. It should be granted as a right not as a begging.

[English]

It was looking like beggars going to the Railway Minister.

[Translation]

Whether Railway expansion work done in this manner? You never prepared any scheme for railway expansion due to which your Railway Budget remained imbalanced. I do not have any grudge against any State. You undertake railway expansion work either in Karnataka or in Hajipur or anywhere else, all are parts of my country. I do not have any grudge. But ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Pramodji, remember that we have been making our demand in the House vehemently for the last three years but invain. Several time we received assurance from Prime Minister but Bihar and Orissa remained neglected. Now this time if something has been done for these States, why these is so much heart burning? ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Nitishji, after all, you belong to Bihar. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No interruption please.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Why do not all your colleagues from Bihar speak? They should also speak on the issue that whether Bihar got more orders...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: They will speak on their turn.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: You have rightly said that we should formulate a Master Plan.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: If I need a Railway Minister from my State for railway expansion, 25 Railway Ministers would have to be appointed and sometimes nothing is achieved even inspite of being State Minister for Railways. It is a separate issue in itself. ...*(Interruptions)*

It appears to me, as is always written and it is also a reality that Railway is a symbol of national integrity. We should come out of the prochial considerations and petty



[Shri Pramod Mahajan]

politics. Therefore, I would request to the House that a Master Plan be formulated on which discussion be held in the House and all Hon'ble members express their views in this regard.

[English]

Let us adopt a Master Plan of expansion for the next 10 or 20 years.

[Translation]

I am not asking to give it them or to that you got conducted a new survey, you got conducted one half of the survey from one State. It is upto you, you may conduct survey from anywhere. I am asking the Hon'ble Minister whether he has ever seen the fate of surveys conducted previously? Have you corrected any of the mistaken committed in previous surveys and amended yourself accordingly? It is my presumption that if you make any provision in your budget to amend your mistake, you will have to make a provision of 10 crore rupees. Now just see the surveys conducted. When first survey is conducted no railway line is laid. After that, second survey is conducted and now railway line would be laid. Then there would be third round survey for doubling of line. The Master Plan I am referring to would include all the aspects including the gauge conversion. Now if I may say that I am also an MP to say a rail line therein my Constituency then you would say, well Pramodji there is Rs. one lakh for the rail line in your area and then I would go to my Constituency and tell my people that I had a lot of quarrel with Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan and then only he agreed to sanction those rail line for this area. However, I know that still it will take atleast 25-30 more years to reach the train there. We should come up from all such things. Railway Bond requires Rs. 20,000 crore to execute its ongoing projects. I hold the opinion that under pressure you can sanction a new project, but that would be yielding to the pressure. Railway Minister or an entire Government derives power from democracy or from the Parliament and by virtue of that he can sanction one or such rail lines.

15.00 hrs.

Presently Rs. 20,000 crore are required to lay all the rail lines that are being demanded and there seems to be no way to mobilise funds to the tune of Rs. 20,000 to cater to need of next quarter century. We might or might not remain here, but your demand for rail lines will remain unfulfilled. After 25 years the demand would again be raised and the same reply would be repeated. If you have this sort of Master Plan, then only God can expand your rail lines.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pramodji, you have done a good ground work. You have taken up good issues but at the same time you should keep in mind the time constraints also.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, I will take just five

minutes more. Now I will read out the issues one by one.

Sir, Rail service involves three things:-Time, safety and convenience. In the Budget you say the trains are punctual now-a-days.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: No I did not say that the trains are arriving in time.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: You said there is an improvement in punctuality. That means there is improvement in their working but time schedule is not being adhered to. I say that train should run on time and there can be a variety of reasons to the contrary. We will have our sympathies with any Rail Minister because it is impossible for a single person to make railways problem free. But even then I feel that trains should come in time and special efforts should be made for achieve this position. One should realise the affects of late running of passenger trains and goods trains. Late arrival of a passenger train can be understood but what is the reason behind late running of goods trains. There is a need to properly monitor the running of passenger trains and goods trains separately.

I will not dwell upon the safety aspect. Not because there are a good safety arrangements but because it is being discussed for two three days and many of my colleagues will cite some examples of it. You too said that law and order is a subject of state list. But who runs the Railways. The Ministry of Railways or the States? We should ponder over it. Somebody proposed today and I too say that there should be a division of territory between the Chief Minister or the issue of security? It should be decided as to who owns this responsibility. Well the security on the platforms should be entrusted to the States and the Railways should oversee the running of the trains. There should be some system, otherwise merely shifting the responsibility will not serve the purpose of providing safety. Let a meeting of the Chief Minister be convened, only then a way out providing much needed safety will be found. Railway is union subject and there is none else who could help in this matter. There is one Railway Minister other Minister have other port folios like Trade, Home etc. The Railway Minister is alone, as it is a union subject constitutionally union subject. There can not be any other way out. Therefore the Central Government should consider the need for providing safety to passengers.

The third requirement relates to convenience. I do not want to dwell upon it as many Members will be speaking on it. You yourself have shown dissatisfaction on it and therefore I need not add to your dissatisfaction. But how to get rid of this resentment. Let us ponder over it. That is why I had said that some scheme can be formulated with regard to catering service and cleanliness. Even if a private agency does this job, it will engage Indians only. This has to be done.

Sir, so far I have said nothing about my Constituency. I would like to say about my Constituency before I conclude my speech. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: America can be visited for this purpose in the name of globalisation. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Nitish ji time is short, otherwise I too want to say something on this issue.

Throughout the world the number of rail passengers is decreasing and it will go on decreasing. In view of the pace of development the world has witnessed in recent times in some countries people consider rail journey as a luxury or entertainment. People do not travel by train there to reach the place of job but in our country people do. In some countries there are 'ornamental expresses', just for display. They donot have much time to travel by train.

Now I want to say something about my Constituency. The half of the passengers come from the city to which I belong.

You have given a figure of one crore and ten lakh passengers, out of which 55 lakh people are daily passengers. They travel by train out of compulsion. They travel and enrich the exchequer and earn their own livelihood as well. This way they do two thing simultaneously. I know your limitations but do something for them, give them some amenities. Tell the Chairman of the Railway Board that if he can not give the facility then at least do not scold them. When asked about the amenities the Chairman said:

[*English*]

"Give me unlimited funds, I will give you unlimited amenities".

[*Translation*]

If that is so, even a child can provide these amenities, what is there in providing amenities with unlimited funds. The grievance of passengers of Mumbai is that even the cattle are loaded, there is a rule as to how many oxen can be put in a wagon. If in violation of rule, move oxen are carried in a wagon, then Railways can be sued. It would be better if an upper ceiling is also fixed by the Parliament on the number of passenger to be carried in a coach. That is why I have said that it should be considered separately. No attention has been paid to it so far. It is not that I come from there and that is why I am saying so. To be an M.P. or not, that is a matter of coincidence ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: The cattle need not board the trains.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Lastly I want to say this much only that your Rail Budget lacks imagination. The partisan politics is riding on the national policy in the matter of various issues. The regionalism has replaced nationalism. The cheap popularity has replaced the healthy public welfare. I heard your speech for one hour and 40 minutes, out of that only 10 minutes were devoted to economics. Paswanji I do not squarely blame you. Even your

predecessor had been doing all this. I fail to understand as to why a Railway Minister says in this august House that twice the trains would leave Mumbai for Chennai. Instead of three, four times in a week this train would run on that route. I have not heard the Minister of Civil Aviation saying that due to summer he has changed the time table. I think.

[*English*]

These are very minor details which should be left to a notification.

[*Translation*]

You give so many advertisements. Give one more advertisement ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV: What is the percentage of the people travelling by air and by trains. Just now you said that was being done in public interest. This is a people's demand ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You speak when your turn comes.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: In view of the caution given by you, while concluding I would say only this much that it was Mr. Actberth who had first separated the Rail Budget from the General Budget in 1942 because at that time the railways had a major contribution in the national economy. 60-65 years have elapsed since then. That contribution of railways has now decreased. Now we have oil, tele-communications, Airlines and various other sectors which have bigger size of capital and their requirement are also much more than that of the railways. Now the pattern of economy has changed. Ram Vilasji you too have changed. If you do not develop a different attitude while drafting the Rail Budget, well, then there is no need for keeping the provision of a separate Rail Budget. Then that would neither be relevant nor important. Please do not be instrumental in setting a new trend of giving up the provision of making a separate Rail Budget. With these words I thank you.

[*English*]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (DEOGARH): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, we have the Railway Budget presented here in this House on 26th February, 1997. Two days after, the General Budget, as usual, was presented on the last day of February. As Shri Pramod Mahajan was mentioning, a separate Budget on Railways was thought of 74 years ago in 1924. On the recommendation of the Actworth Committee, it was decided that Railway Accounts should be separated from the General Accounts. Accordingly, a provision for separate Railway Budget was made.

Even after the Independence, the Railways used to dominate not only in transport sector of our country but also was playing a very dominant role in the entire economic scenario of the country. In 1950-51, the Railways accounted for 91 per cent freight movement of the total

[Shri Sriballav Panigrahi]

goods traffic. That was the position at the beginning of our Plan period. But what is the present position? Today, the Railways carry less than 40 per cent of the total goods traffic and 60 per cent of the goods traffic has gone to the road sector.

As regards passenger traffic, during 1950-51, 80 per cent of the total passengers were availing of Railway transport and the residue, that is about 20 per cent passengers were using road transport. Now the present position is just the reverse. About 80 per cent of the total passengers travel by road and the rest 20 per cent travel by train. The figure of 11 million passengers which the hon. Railway Minister referred to, come to 20 per cent. This is the position.

Again Sir, what will happen by 2000 A.D. ...*(Interruptions)* Sir, by 2000 A.D., i.e., by the turn of the century, according to the Economic Survey—which was circulated a few days before—the freight traffic by road which is now 60 per cent would go up to 65 per cent and 35 per cent would go to the road sector.

Again, in respect of passenger traffic, 87 per cent will move by road transport and 13 per cent will move by rail. What sort of dominance Railways claim in our economy and in our transport sector?

I need not minimise the importance of Railways. There are certain welcome features in the functioning of Railways. Our Railways are the single largest public sector enterprise and the single largest employer in the country. It is the largest railway in the whole world. Ours is the only railway which runs on profit also. This is the only railway which also pays dividend to the general exchequer. These are positive things associated with our Railways.

There are certain other features in the Railway Budget which I welcome and I thank the Minister for that. Of course, we know that in Railways, there are some planners, economists and bureaucrats who always try to highlight or emphasise that Railways are losing their commercial character day-by-day, it should be totally commercial. At least, in India, we cannot look at Railways from that angle. India is a country with many languages. It is a vast country; it is a large country with many languages, many races, hilly areas and so many other things. Therefore, to maintain national integrity is the topmost important task of all of us. To strengthen that much called for integrity, Railways also have to play a very important role right from Jammu to Kanyakumari and from North-East to Kutch.

In this year's Budget speech, the Minister has asserted this time also that Railways cannot be merely a commercial concern; they have also to meet certain social obligations. We welcome this. As you know, the objective of our Plan is growth with social justice. We have to fight regionalism. In the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir, there was no railway earlier. Of course, in respect of Jammu and Kashmir, two years before, there was a programme to

connect Kashmir portion by railways during the previous Government's tenure. This aspect is a very welcome feature.

So far as the budgetary support is concerned, hitherto it was dwindling. At one point of time, I think, during the Fifth Plan period, it was as high as 75 per cent. Last year, it came down from 75 per cent to 16 per cent. It cannot be denied that Railways come under the category of infrastructure. Railways are the best infrastructure in our country and it is a catalyst for the development of our country. Therefore, this budgetary support has got to be adequate. There should be adequate provision for Railways by way of budgetary support. It should not be reduced. This year, it has risen from 16 per cent to 21 per cent. This is a good thing. So far as the provision for North-East and Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, it is also a welcome feature.

Thirty-seven surveys have been included in this year's Budget. Some eleven new trains are being introduced. There is some expansion or the frequency of some trains is being increased. There is something that seems to be a compilation of the demands made by Members of different parties. Some demands were accepted, some were not accepted and some were partially accepted. On the whole, it seems to be a compilation of those demands.

For completion of the ongoing lines, we want a mind-boggling amount of Rs. 20,000 crore, according to one estimate based on today's price index. In course of time, escalation will be there and this figure will also undergo upward revision. That way Rs. 20,000 crore will be Rs. 30,000 crore and Rs. 40,000 crore in course of time. That is the problem. To meet the requirements of the other sectors of railways, another Rs. 20,000 crore to Rs. 30,000 crore will be necessary. If this is the position today, what is going to happen in the 21st century which we are fast approaching? This is the second Budget of this Government presented by Shri Ram Vilas Paswan. We are on the verge of 21st century. That way, it appears to be a very very *ad hoc* Budget. Perspective planning, future planning and National Plan concept are not reflected in this Budget. It is not a happy thing.

I said that there is five per cent increase in long-distance sleeper coach and ten per cent increase in AC First Class Fare. I do not grudge that ten per cent increase in AC First Class fare. There is 12 per cent increase in freight rate. These are the highlights of this year's Budget.

As regards five per cent increase in sleeper class fare, I would like to say that even common people are required to undertake long and overnight journey and, that way, I do not think the hon. Minister's assertion that "I am not taxing the common man", is correct. Common men also do travel by train overnight. That way, common man is also affected.

There is 12 per cent increase in freight rate. Without any fear of contradiction, I would like to say that Indian railway freight now is the highest in the world. There is

23 per cent increase in the course of seven months. That way, this year is very much inflationary in nature. Everybody knows that it is a question of time when petroleum price hike will be there. Any day there will be upward revision of the prices of petroleum products. Coupled with this, there is five per cent service charges introduced in road transport sector in the General Budget for goods movement.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Fare is the same.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: Freight rates will affect the economy. I think earlier also this point has been dealt with at length. That way, 3.2 per cent further increase will be there. The inflation rate was four per cent when you took over as Minister of Railways. Now when you are presenting this Budget, it is double that figure and it will move upward. I am sure we will be happy if it does not touch double digit figure. But we have every reason to be apprehensive that it will go beyond ten per cent. It will be 11 per cent or 12 per cent. That is the apprehension today. In spite of that, Railway Board has made a ridiculous claim—last time also in July and again they have repeated this time after the presentation of this Budget—that the effect will be minimal on the prices. I do not know how the Railway Board is coming to this conclusion which is ridiculous.

Let them say that this is their predicament and they have to increase the freight rate, fare rate etc. But why are they coming before the public with the ridiculous statement saying that it will have no effect, that it will have minimal effect and insignificant effect on our economy on our prices. Instead, this will have a cascading effect on our economy. The 12 per cent increase in freight rate at a stretch, another 10 per cent increase effected only seven or eight months back, the price hike in respect of the petroleum products which is in the offing and the five per cent service charge on road movement of goods of other things, all this will have a cascading effect on the economy. There is no doubt about it.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: I want to correct my reply to the extent it may be found incorrect. It has been mentioned just now that prices of all the essential commodities are increasing. Last time, prices of petroleum products also were hiked by 20 per cent. As he is saying now, these prices are likely to increase in near future. He is aware of the fact that 16 lakh employees are working in Railways owing to which it has to bear the brunt of the increase in prices of petroleum products because their consumption of these items is much more in the Railways. An amount of Rs. 3500 crore has been kept aside implementation of the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission. Even then he has quoted an economist like Shri Manmohan Singh saying that the Railways should not be given budgetary support and it should fend for itself. Under the circumstances, if the Railways take up developmental works and have to resort to, hiking the sleeper class fare by even 15 per cent in order to stand on their own, it is criticised like anything. If the Railways

is given Rs. 2000 or Rs 5000 in the budget, it will be spent on laying of new railway lines and not on gauge conversion. We will spend this amount on laying of new railway lines in the North East. I would like to seek the suggestions of hon. Members as to how the Railways can go about undertaking developmental works, extending the railway lines upto far of villages while, at the same time, generating its own resources.

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: I am grateful to the hon. Railway Minister. I wish that he has some little patience! I am not just criticising the Budget the criticism's sake. I am explaining the real position, what it is like.

SHRI SYED MASUDAL HOSSAIN (MURSHIDABAD): You are criticising the other Members while saying: "I am not like other Members."

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGARHI (DEOGARH): I am not criticising others. When your turn comes, you speak.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Sriballav Panigarhi, please address the Chair.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGARH (DEOGARH): I said what it is like. I am analysing what is the present position and I want to say what should be done. Today, in the beginning itself, I have said that there are certain good features in the Budget. In the beginning, I have said that the railway is the main infrastructure, this is a catalyst for the development of the country and more and adequate budgetary support should be there. I have said this. I am on record. At the same time, I am on the point of what effect these increases will have on the economy. I was trying to say about that.

Sir, I know the predicaments of the hon. Minister. As far as the country is concerned, there are the challenging situations ahead of the Railway Minister. We have got to do much more in consultation with the different political parties. There should be good understanding among different sections of people. We have to involve the workers also. We have to ensure the participation of the workers in the management. It is not an individual task that the Minister is facing. But it is there ahead of us all in the days to come, in the 21st century. How can we address these problems? I have my own suggestions and I will make my suggestions now.

Over the last six or seven months, the health of the Railways, the economy of the Railways, instead of making improvement, is deteriorating. It is indicated through the operational cost ratio. As you know, the operational cost ratio is something like the working expenses of the Railways in relation to their total gross income. It stands today at 91 per cent. Seven months before, when Shri Ram Vilas Paswan became the Minister, it was at 86 per cent. So, over the last seven months, it has gone up by 5 per cent more. I know his helplessness. He is helpless. But, at the same time, it has got to be analysed here.



[Shri Sriballav Panigrahi]

Again, about the percentage of price hike, I am coming to that. This Railway Budget will result in the rise in prices of coal by Rs. 45 per tonne. One will have to pay eight paise more for one litre of HSD and nine paise per litre for petrol before the proposed hike of petroleum products takes place.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Panigrahiji, you can continue next time.

[Translation]

Panigrahi ji, now it is time for Private Members Bill. You can continue your speech after that.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say one line on the matter on which hon. Members have expressed their concern. The newspapers have carried a news item regarding dacoity committed in Rajdhani Express train. I would like to tell that the news is baseless and not correct at all.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR (MANGALORE): But it has been telecast on Doordarshan...(Interruptions)

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Doordarshan has telecast incorrect news...(Interruptions) 33 people had died in Kokrajhar but Doordarshan telecast the news that 300 persons died there. ...(Interruptions) I do not know how it happened. ...(Interruptions)

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV: Why do you shout on a baseless thing. ...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please maintain the dignity of the House.

15.30 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS'  
BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

[English]

Sixth Report

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House shall now take up Private Members' Business.

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA (PATIALA): Sir, I beg to move:

"That this House do agree with the Sixth Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 4 March, 1997."

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That this House do agree with the Sixth Report of

the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 4 March, 1997."

*The motion was adopted.*

15.31 hrs.

PRIVATE MEMBERS BILLS

(I) *Protection of Property Rights of Women and Girls Bill.\**

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI (KHAJURAHO): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to protect the Property rights of women and girls and for matters connected therewith.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to protect the property rights of women and for matters connected therewith.

*The Motion was adopted*

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: I introduce the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, along with it I request the House to pass the Bill without any debate on it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It will be seen at the proper stage.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: Sir, it is more essential to accord Property Rights to Women than the Right to Reservation. I am sorry to have interrupted to say this.

(II) *Maharishi Valmiki National University Bill\**

15.32 hrs.

[Translation]

SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI: I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to establish and incorporate a University at the national level for the promotion of creativity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"The leave be granted to introduce a Bill to establish and incorporate a University at the national level for the promotion of creativity and for matters connected therewith

\*Published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part-II, Section-2, dated 6.3.97.