

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please ask your question now. It cannot be like this.

[Translation]

SHRI R.L.P. VERMA : Therefore, I would like to know from the hon'ble Minister whether the Government propose to constitute a Committee comprising of the concerned MPs and MLAs representing the forest area with a view to know the yearwise expenditure incurred on afforestation during the Eighth Five Year Plan, the area put under forest cover and whether the plants have actually been planted on land or these are on the papers only? Whether the hon'ble Minister would like to give the factual position in this regard?

CAPT JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not a matter of deforestation, it is related to afforestation. Where there are forests and where afforestation is done by State Government. (Interruptions) State Governments monitor it. Besides, our Ministry also keeps an eye on the position in two ways. First, we get reports from State Governments about the number of seedlings planted in Blocks and the villages. These reports are placed in the Lok Sabha Library. Secondly, we get the same investigated by an independent agency. I am also telling about that investigation. (Interruptions)

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Would you please tell the name of the agency through which it is being investigated?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : No. This is Question Hour. You cannot do like this.

[Translation]

CAPT JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD : I am telling the investigation was done in 1991-92 on national level by Anne Hill University, Shillong and you want to know about Bihar. (Interruptions)

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, a scam of Rs. 200 crore has been committed in Bihar. The Government should give details about that.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please allow the Minister to answer.

[Translation]

He is answering. Please listen to him. You are not listening to him.

CAPT JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD : The investigation has been done in case of Mehsana which is in Ahmedabad. (Interruptions) It was done by Koraput Treeland Development Service, Bangalore.

(Interruptions) Shri C.M. Sethi is a retired Officer. (Interruptions) Please listen to me. (Interruptions)

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY : A scandal involving Rs. 200 crores has been committed in Bihar. (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I have not permitted him. This is Question Hour.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please allow the Minister to answer.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : You can give a short answer.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

CAPT JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD : You are asking about the investigation conducted in Bihar. (Interruptions) The investigation has been conducted through I.I.P.O. (Interruptions) The investigation has been done through independent agency. (Interruptions)

[English]

DR. K.P. RAMALINGAM : Mr. Speaker, Sir, our country is exporting sandalwood to other parts of the world. At present, there is a ban on seedling of sandalwood plantation on private 'patta' land. Will the hon. Minister announce if there is any scheme with the Central Government or is there any proposal to instruct the State Government to remove the ban? Then only can we increase the afforestation of sandalwood.

SHRI ANIL BASU : This does not come under afforestation.

That is included in horticulture. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

CAPT JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Central Government has nothing to do with the decision to be taken about the selection of plants. It depends upon the State Governments. (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down. As many hon. Members are interested to know about this subject, we will have Half-an-Hour discussion.

Shortage of Rail Wagons

*82 SHRI DHIRENDRA AGARWAL : With the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state

(a) the extent of shortage of rail wagons in the country at present.

(b) whether the demand for wagons is likely to increase in the near future; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to meet the shortage of wagons?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Judged in the context of the Railway's freight target, the wagon availability has been adequate to meet the proportionate loading target in the current financial year. However, in relation to the total demand in the country for rail transport, there are pockets of unsatisfied demand in some areas.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The measures proposed include increasing procurement of wagons, improving productivity of rolling stock, encouraging users to procure wagons under Own Your Wagon Scheme, etc.

[Translation:]

SHRI DHIRENDRA AGARWAL: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to state that the reply given by hon. Minister is unsatisfactory. If there is no shortage of wagons, then why is there is a month long waiting list for booking of railway wagons in every station? Why are the consumable items transported in open wagons resulting in a loss of crores of rupees every year. Why does not the Railways provide water proof wagons to cement and chemical factories to avoid the loss of crores of rupees. My first question is that indent for the wagons are not being accepted from the large scale units in several stations. Wagons are not being given to small and cottage industries for piecemeal loading. What are the reasons therefor?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr Speaker, Sir, so far as the Rail Wagons are concerned, there are different seasons. The requirements are not the same in every season. The present season is the rainy season during which the requirements are generally lesser. The requirement would go up after the month of October. Many indents are then received at the booking point but the demand falls during the rainy season. The requirement differs year to year. We have two sectors. One is the core sector under which coal, steel, cement, petroleum, foodgrains, fertilizers and minerals are covered and the other sector comprises of tea, wood, textiles etc. Besides there are salt and public food grains also. It is a fact that the demand for 72268 wagons is lying pending with us presently out of these 30000 wagons are required for salt. With regard to the public foodgrains, a demand of 14000 wagons is lying pending out of which 7000 wagons are required exclusively for salt. Just as I told hon. Member that a demand of 72268 wagons is there and we are supplying 44000 wagons. This is not a very big demand. This demand can be fulfilled in two days. We are supplying the wagons to the core sector and general sector as per their requirement.

SHRI DHIRENDRA AGARWAL: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to whether

due to the shortage of rail wagons, the track materials are not being transported because of which work pertaining to track renewal is lagging behind the. For example, concrete sleepers are lying in many factories for which 90 per cent payment has already been made by the Railway in advance. However more than a year has passed but those sleepers have not been lifted from there. I want to know the reasons therefor. Railways' money is involved but even then Railways is not taking the delivery of those sleepers and is planning to give tenders to new factories. Why is such a thing being done? The old sleepers factories which are the ancillaries factories of Railways are utilising only 75 per cent of their capacity. They are being asked to utilise this much of their capacity only, whereas they are in a position to utilise cent percent capacity. However the Railways desires to set up new units by adopting open tender system, whereas the track renewal of hundreds of kilometers can be completed with the help of the sleepers lying in the old units. What is the Minister of Railways going to do about those sleepers?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Minister has mentioned a particular place and if he gives it in writing, it will be looked into.

[English:]

SHRI VM SUDHEERAN: Sir, I am not satisfied with the reply given by the hon. Railway Minister.

Sir, Kerala is totally neglected as far as supply of coaches and wagons are concerned. The people, especially of the industrial sector are experiencing much difficulties. So, I would like to request the hon. Minister to take immediate steps to meet the requirements of the people of Kerala in regard to the supply of coaches and wagons. (Interruptions)

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Sir, I have requested for a supplementary on a policy statement. (Interruptions)

[Translation:]

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT: I would like to ask hon. Minister a question. I do not want to go into the profitability or loss aspect of the Railway Budget. All the states give priority to small scale industries. In 5-7 years the complete policy. (Interruptions)

[English:]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Sudheeran, you have only made a request. It has been noted down. (Interruptions)

SHRI VM SUDHEERAN: Sir, I would like to request the hon. Minister to meet the requirements of coaches and wagons in the State of Kerala.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Mr. Minister, you pay some attention to Kerala.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Yes, Sir, I will pay attention to this problem.

[Translation]

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : You will have to take a policy decision. If rack is given within 24 hours, it is loaded immediately. The big units and industries load the racks immediately however small units and industries load one wagon in four days. Their individual booking has been stopped and they do not get the bookings. Small scale units have been wiped out because of competition and they are incurring losses. Railway is giving all the facilities to large scale units. A policy decision is required to be taken in this regard. Would you seriously consider it and take a decision? This is an important issue as the small scale industries are losing ground. They need to be made viable. They are being beaten in the competition because of Railways.

MR SPEAKER : Do not drag your question.

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is important. It is very difficult to obtain one way indent for individual wagon and they do not get any wagon for four months at times.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr Speaker, Sir, this question is regarding the supply of wagons. There is no shortage of wagons. I would like to inform Hon'ble Members that we had set a target of one lakh wagons. It is true that there has been a decline in the production and purchase of wagons during last few years. I have got all the figures in this regard. If Hon'ble Member wishes to know, I can give him the figures. In 1992 provision was made for 27500 wagons but only 26129 wagons were purchased. Similarly 19649 wagons were purchased against the provision for 22500 wagons in 1993-94. In 1994-95 the target was for 12000 wagons but only 10575 wagons were purchased. Similarly a provision of 19950 wagons was made in 1995-96. There was a target of one lakh wagons in Eighth Five Year Plan. In view of the target we have decided to purchase 25 thousand wagons this year. I believe that we will be able to meet the target and there will be no shortage of wagons.

[English]

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : As far as the small scale sector is concerned, the wagons are not available to them. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : A Committee was constituted in this regard in Maharashtra Assembly under the Chairmanship of Shri Rahman Khan in the month of March. Its terms was for six months. This Committee had made recommendations in this regard which were laid in this House on 12th March. Its report was received in the Ministry on 15th March. We are examining it in detail.

[English]

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : The Planning Commission had also recommended to the Finance

Ministry to give additional wagons. (Interruptions) Are you getting them?

[Translation]

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY : Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to ask a question of policy matter from Hon'ble Minister. The question is that it has been indicated in the Annual Report that in 1980-81 the number of wagons in the country was four lakh nine hundred forty six however in ten years time i.e. in 1994-95, the number of wagons came down to 2,91,360. I want to ask Hon'ble Minister as to whether more than one lakh wagons have derailed or their number has been reduced during the past decade.

These wagons were being used for freight. What is Hon'ble Minister's reply to that?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr Speaker, Sir, what the Hon'ble Member has stated is not the correct position. The correct figure is 463037 wagons. I think that Hon'ble Member has probably stated that there were four wheeler wagons earlier and now there are eight wheeler wagons and their proportion is 2:5. From this point of view, the number of wagons stated by him is not correct.

[English]

MR SPEAKER : Please put a short and pointed question.

SHRI PR DASMUNSI : Sir, you were the Labour Minister in the previous Government, so you may be aware of this fact. The Minister has just now replied that there is no shortage of wagons. He has also said that priority is being given to special sectors like cement, food, steel, etc.

I would like to bring it to your knowledge that the biggest Public Sector Jute Unit in India, called NJMC, has been suffering for the last two months due to shortage of wagons. As a result of this 25,000 workers are getting delayed wages. The Chairman of the NJMC has sent repeated requests to the Railway Board yet the wagons have not been released so far. I am giving you a point-blank example because yesterday I had been to my constituency. I found that 25,000 workers were not getting their wages in time only because the wagons had not been released. With the result the finished goods could not be loaded. The Chairman of NJMC is not less than an IAS Officer. He had shown me the correspondence that was exchanged between the Railway Board and NJMC. Will the hon. Minister immediately take an appropriate step in this regard?

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into the issue raised by Hon'ble Member. As I stated earlier, the wagons have not been procured in required proportion during last three years. Hence, I would like to inform hon. Member that as per our information, the wagons are made available keeping in view different seasons.

[English]

MR SPEAKER : I know Shri Giri's hand is higher because right from the morning he has been raising his hand

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Minister has said that to meet the increasing demand wagons have to be procured. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether such procurement would be made from the domestic market or from abroad. The former Railway Minister, Shri Jaffer Sharief, had said that the Railways had procured wagons from abroad to meet the demand of the country. In future the demand of wagons would increase. The hon. Minister has pointed out that wagons have to be procured. May I know from the hon. Minister whether such wagons will be procured from domestic market or from abroad?

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, he had made a detailed recommendation in this regard. When an open tender was floated, bottlenecks were created as a result thereof. However, I would like to inform Hon. Members that so far as the procurement of wagons from abroad is concerned, we won't procure the wagons from abroad. Competition would be there in the country itself for all procurements. (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN : In his reply the hon. Minister has stated that priority is being given to special sectors like food, etc. It is our experience in Kerala that when we procure rice and other essential commodities from far away States, for want of wagons they keep on lying there itself and we have to pay huge demurrage charges. As a result of this the prices shoot up. Discrimination is being shown towards the State of Kerala. The officials influence the sanctioning authority not to release wagons required for loading rice and other essential commodities to Kerala. So the prices of these essential commodities are going up. I would request the hon. Minister to kindly instruct the officials to give priority in sanctioning wagons for loading rice and other essential commodities to Kerala.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : There is no question of giving priority.

[Translation]

Whenever we receive any complaints in this regard, we take action immediately. As I have told the Hon. Members that the production of wagons has declined during last four years. We have been able to procure only 74303 wagons against the target of 81000 wagons and we intend to procure 25000 wagons this year to meet the shortage and thus, I think that all the complaints will be resolved them.

SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VERMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Gujarat leads in salt production. Large quantity of salt

gets accumulated there and since the wagons are not given in time, it causes a lot of problems to the traders of Gujarat. The number of wagons required by the people of Gujarat for carrying salt in the coming season should be allotted to them. Secondly there are coal based electrically generators in Gujarat. At times electricity generation is affected in the absence of coal. I would like to know from Hon'ble Minister as to whether he would provide the required number of wagons to Gujarat for transportation of coal and salt?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I have already stated that out of the total wagons, 7000 are meant exclusively for Gujarat and we would definitely pay attention to it.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : It seems today is the day for Railways. The next question is also on Railways.

[Translation]

Conversion of Narrow Gauge Line into Broad Gauge

*83. SHRI GANGA RAM KOLI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the details of narrow gauge lines proposed to be converted into broad-gauge in Rajasthan during the current financial year;

(b) whether there is any proposal to convert Mathura-Badi-Dholpur rail line into broad gauge; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No narrow gauge lines are under conversion in Rajasthan. However, the metre gauge lines which will be converted in Rajasthan during the current financial year are Mehsana-Ajmer, Viramgam-Mehsana and Marwar-Jodhpur.

(b) and (c) There is no line from Mathura to Dholpur via Badi. Perhaps the Member is referring to Dholpur-Sazmathura narrow gauge line. A survey for conversion of this line is in progress. Further consideration would be possible once the survey report becomes available.

[Translation]

SHRI GANGA RAM KOLI : Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state the details of narrow gauge lines proposed to be converted into broad gauge in Rajasthan during the current financial year. Mathura is mentioned herein which is a misprint. It is Sarmathura. Whether there is any proposal to convert Sarmathura-Badi-Dholpur rail line into broad gauge?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Hon'ble Members would be pleased to know that