

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Thursday, May 15, 1997/Vaisakha 25, 1919 (Saka)

*The Lok Sabha met at Two minutes
past Eleven of the Clock*

[SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Recruitment of Rail Passengers Service Agents

[English]

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*561 SHRI GULAM MOHD. MIR MAGANI:

SHRIMATI SARADA TADIPARTHI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any advertisement has been given for recruitment of Rail Passengers Service Agents;

(b) if so, the number of Agents recruited during the last two years and current year, so far and terms and conditions for their recruitment;

(c) the details of trains in which satellite based telephone services are available and the charges fixed per call;

(d) the amount which have to be paid by Railways to Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited for this purpose;

(e) the target fixed to extend these services in all the express and mail trains and particularly in long distance trains; and

(f) the extent to which the telephone facility will help in reducing the train accidents ?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (f) A Statement is laid on the Table of Sabha.

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 168 Rail Travellers' Service Agents were granted licences during the period 1995 to 1997 (till date). The terms and conditions for appointment of Rail Travellers' Service Agents are given in the Authorisation of Rail Travellers' Service Agents Rules, 1985 notified under Statutory Order No. 881 (E) dated 5.12.1985 published in

the Gazette of India Extraordinary part-II Section-3 Sub-section (ii) dated 5.12.1985 as amended vide Statutory Order No. 771 (E) dated 30.7.1987 published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part - II Section-3 Sub-section (ii) dated 13.8.1987 and Statutory Order No. 331(E) dated 1.7.1992 as published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part-II Section-3 Sub-section (ii) dated 26.5.1993.

(c) The satellite based telephone services have been made available in New Delhi-Mumbai Rajdhani Express trains and Hazarat Nizamuddin-Mumbai August Kranti Rajdhani Express trains. The call charge are Rs. 126/- per minute for inland Calls i.e. calls within India and Rs. 162/- per minute for all International Calls. These charges have been fixed provisionally.

(d) The amount payable by the Railways to Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. is Rs. 120/- per minute for the inland Calls and Rs. 150/- per minute for International Calls.

(e) These services are planned to be extended to all the Rajdhani Express trains by the end of 1997-98. Its extension to all the Express and Mail Trains would depend upon the success and popularity of the scheme in Rajdhani Express and logistic problem of providing the service in these trains.

(f) The existing satellite telephone facility provided in the trains will not help in reducing the train accidents. It has been provided primarily as a passenger amenity. However, in case of accidents, the facility can be used for passing accident related message and relief operations provided the telephone equipments and coach in which the telephone is installed is not damaged.

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA: One third of the seats should be occupied by ladies.

[Translation]

SHRI GULAM MOHD. MIR MAGANI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the concerned Ministry has given any advertisement for recruitment of Agents for the convenience of Rail Passengers. If so, the number of Agents recruited so far and the terms and conditions for their recruitment whether such Agents are available in Jammu & Kashmir ? If not, why not you depute local Agents there so as to provide them employment.

SHRI RAMVILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman Sir, in Part (b) of my reply I have already stated that 168 Rail Travellers' Service Agents were granted licences during the period 1995 to 1997 (till date). I have got the figures of the last one year, during which 15 advertisements were

given. These advertisements include Jammu Tavi, Pathankot, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Kaika and Udhampur and this advertisement was given on 17.12.96.

SHRI GULAM MOHD. MIR MAGANI: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the telephone facility provided in Railways on experimental basis has proved successful. If so, the amount recovered for call so far ?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, so far as the question of success is concerned, we have not achieved much success in this regard. As I have already stated that the charges are Rs. 126/- per minute for Inland Call and the amount payable by Railways for this is Rs. 120/- while the charges for an International call is Rs. 162/- per minute and the amount payable by Railways for this is Rs. 150/-. However, the problem is that the satellite based telephones have been installed in the Pantry cars of the selected trains. The passengers may be facing some inconvenience in having access to these pantry cars. Whatever may be the reasons behind it, the facility has not been as popular as we expected.

[English]

SHRIMATI SARADA TADIPARTHI: Madam, I would like to draw attention of the hon. Minister to the news item entitled, "Railways Licences allotted out of turn", appearing in Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad on 2nd February, 1997. I hope necessary action would be taken against those involved.

In regard to train telephone services, the cost of call charges at the rate of Rs. 126/- per minute seems to be very high though it is a boon for the tourists, executives and businessmen who grudge that their cellular phones go dead once the train has crossed Delhi's borders till the outskirts of Mumbai or any other main city.

So, I would like to know whether the Government proposes to utilise the train telephone facilities to control the problem of growing incidence of looting and train robberies. If so, what arrangements have been made in this regard and, if not, what are the reasons thereof ?

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this question consists of three parts. In the first part he has referred to "Deccan Herald", but I do not have any information in this regard. I would get a copy of it from the hon. Member and conduct an inquiry in this regard and if the allegation is found correct, suitable action will be taken. The second part of the question is regarding the telephone rates. As I have just told that we are working on 'no profit no loss' basis. We have to pay Rs. 120/- per minute for the Inland Call to Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. while we recover Rs. 126/- per minute from the passengers which includes service charge. Similarly we charge Rs. 162/- per minute for an international call from the passengers whereas we have to pay Rs. 150/- and that too on "no profit no loss" basis.

So far as our present communication system or telephone system is concerned, unless connect the system with the next station, or with the driver or guard, there is no likelihood of any improvement. Besides, this system requires adequate expenditure. I have already stated in my reply, if you go through the last paragraph, I have mentioned that the existing satellite telephone facility provided in the trains will not help in reducing the train accidents.

SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister the terms and conditions for the recruitment of Travel Agents, at major Railway Stations. If some more Travel Agents are recruited at major stations, they develop a feeling of competition. I would like to know the number of major Railway Junctions like Nagpur, Hyderabad and the terms and conditions for their recruitment. Besides, whether any proposal for recruitment of such Agents at stations where they have not been recruited, is under the consideration of the Government. Secondly, my submission is that the Railways can also be benefitted by the telephone facility provided in the trains, as referred to by the Ministry with regard to the accidents, thefts, burglary etc. Therefore, this facility should be provided in all long distance Mail/Express trains even with additional expenditure. I would like to know whether the Government propose to provide the telephone facility, in other long distance trains likewise.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: The hon. Member has just now referred to the matter regarding Agents. We do not deal the matter. The General Managers at different stations have been given the right, and they recruit the Agents as per their requirement. So far as the number of Agents is concerned, there is no different opinion. Even I am not satisfied as demand is on very higher side and the supply is comparatively less. The result is that when authorised dealers are appointed, they are scrutinized and 120 Agents found involved in irregularities have been terminated. However, the problem is that current process of scrutiny is not up to the mark. Under a ruling given by the Supreme Court some provision should be there for people who cannot stand in a queue under that provision the total number of persons provided the facility since 1996 is 8.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to submit to the hon. Minister that in the past the passengers in Rajdhani Express and some other trains were given the opportunity to enjoy *bhajans* in the early hours everyday. But they have been deprived of this opportunity since when the hon. Minister took over as the Railway Minister. Once the hon. Minister had revealed to me that he did not have any faith in God. But I have seen his photograph with a large turban on his head at Ajmer Sharif. It shows that he does have faith in God, then why playing records of *bhajans* in train have been stopped ? Why the feeling of others who have faith in God has been hurt and which type of secularism is it ? The records of bhajan expressing equal respect to all religions can be played. Why playing of *bhajans* have been stopped and

when the old practice is likely to be restored ? I would like to know whether the hon. Minister would give reply to this effect ?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: I would like to know from the hon. Member Bharatiji the part of the question under which she seeks the answer.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: With regard to the passengers' service...(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI BHAVANABEN DEVRAJ BHAJI CHIKHALIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister will have to give reply to this ...(Interruptions)

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: It is regarding the Passengers' Service...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: This has nothing to do with the question. You can discuss it with the hon. Minister.

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: He is guilty conscious that is why he is unable to give reply...(Interruptions)

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: There is no question of guilty consciousness. Ours is a secular country (Interruptions) Since the matter is not at all related to the question, no reply is needed. We, through Railways, are getting a cassette recorded on the National Anthem showing equal respect to all religions and it will be introduced very soon...(Interruptions)

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: When it is likely to be introduced...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do not turn the Question Hour into Zero Hour. Please take your seats.

[Translation]

SHRI VIJAY ANNAJI MUDE: I have a question ...(Interruptions). May I know as to at whose instance the playing of religious songs has been stopped now. Why not the religious songs of all the religions are played in trains...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat. Please sit down.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am thankful to you for providing me an opportunity to express my views. I would like to know from the hon. Minister of Railways that railway passengers...(Interruptions). Let me

speak...(Interruptions) why are you turning it into a Zero Hour...(Interruptions) Let me speak. Why are you turning it into Zero Hour...(Interruptions)

SHRI VINAY KATIYAR: Would they also erase the religious quotations written on the walls of this secretariat...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is this ? Please let the questions go on. These are your own questions. Please do not do this.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Vinay Katiyar, this is not proper. This is your Question Hour.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: You ask the Minister to reply. He is not giving to reply.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN: This had nothing to do with the main question, yet the Minister has replied to that. I have also asked him to talk to the Minister later on.

(Interruptions)

SHRI VINAY KATIYAR: Half an hour discussion may please be allowed on this subject...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: In that case....

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will not call them....

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do not do this....

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those who are not permitted may kindly take their seats.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: Madam, Chairperson, it has been stated in the reply of the hon. Minister that 168 Railway Passengers Service Agents were issued licence since 1995 to 1997: Through you, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any provision of reservation for the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and O.B.Cs. Categories in issuing such licences. If there is any, then how many persons belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and O.B.Cs. have been issued licenses. Moreover, I would also like to know whether there is any reservation for the educated unemployed persons ?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Madam, Chairperson, till now there is no provision of reservation for Scheduled

Castes, Scheduled Tribes, O.B.Cs, minorities for the unemployed youth. Nevertheless, I have instructed to give them priority.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: You should ensure reservation for them rather than giving priority to them ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: If you are interested to know, I must tell you that I have provided 30 percent reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in allocation of Stalls and Canteens and moreover I have given instructions that 50 percent should be kept reserved for them unless the reservation quota is filled up...*(Interruptions)*. I have given a similar directive for giving priority to O.B.C. candidates. You know that 27 percent reservation is being provided to backward class people. There are 9 unofficial Members in each Railway Recruitment Board in which 3 Members are from the backward classes, 3 from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes while 3 Members are from the minority communities ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT: There is no Member from these categories in the Railway Board.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: What I will request you is that whatever concrete information you want to have about this subject, send it to the Minister. He will surely send the answers. Then only, will you get the answers.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: You should not doubt anybody's intention. The leader of opposition is sitting here. The Member of Railway Board is an officer of secretary level. If he supports the idea of giving reservation to schedule castes and scheduled tribes, at the secretary level, the Government has no objection to it.

[English]

PROF. JITENDRA NATH DAS: Madam Chairman, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Railways to the fact that the North Eastern Region has been neglected in the field of railway communication facilities since long though the United Front Government is committed to improve the same in this area. One Rajdhani Express is being run thrice a week now and our demand is that this Rajdhani Express should be run daily. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether telephone services will be provided in any train running in this region.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: I shall visit North-Eastern States alongwith the Prime Minister from 19th to 24th of this month. We shall take necessary steps for providing railway facilities including telecom facility in those areas.

[English]

PROF. JITENDRA NATH DAS: I would like to know whether the Member of Parliament of the concerned area will be invited to that meeting.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Wherever I go, I invite the MPs of the concerned area and also the MPs of that State to have discussions with them.

Cancellation of C-Dot Tenders

*562. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether more than 100 Members of Parliament have requested the Government to save C-DOT from extinction and sought cancellation of two tenders floated by the Department of Telecommunications for 1.3 million and 1.69 million lines;

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon;

(c) whether these contracts are likely to benefit certain multinational cartels and result in a heavy loss; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) About 50 MPs have jointly requested the Government to cancel tender opened by DOT in March '96 for procurement of 1.3 Millions lines.

(b) The representation received has been seen. Keeping in view the requirement of large digital switches and the present production capacity of C-DOT large switches in the country, it is necessary to procure 1.3 million and 1.69 million new technology switches in two phases during the years 1997-98 and 1998-99 to meet plan objectives. Advance Purchase Orders for procurement of 1.3 million lines have already been issued.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

[English]

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Madam Chairman, may I know from the hon. Minister whether these large digital switches which are going to be imported are available in our country? May I also further know whether the Indian Telephone Industries, which is a public sector undertaking and a premier organisation in this line, has got the capacity to manufacture these large digital switches ? If so, why were purchases not made or orders not placed with the Indian Telephone Industries ?

Madam, you will be astonished to know that the Indian Telephone Industries is going to be a sick industry all over the country, particularly due to the lack of orders placed