

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please put your question after giving this background.

[English]

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA : Sir, their party Member has raised a question about the priority of India for signing this Agreement and I am replying to them through you. Now, our priority is to reach the CIS States and open a trade line with them and that is only an internal agreement with that country.

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Bhatiaji, you cannot reply. Please put questions after giving the background.

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA : I am coming to the question. I have just given the background. We have given them tenders for that area in which it will be properly linking the two states from Bandar Abbas to Mashhad and from Mashhad to Baisek. So, this is where India and Indian Railways come and it will be beneficial for both the countries to reach that State and to have more trade with USA.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I do not think there is any question in this.

Steam Loco Engine Workers

*362. SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether due to the phasing out of steam local engines several thousands of coal and ash handling workers doing perennial jobs have been thrown out of employment;

(b) whether the Government have received any representation demanding re-deployment of these workers in suitable fields; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT

(a) Phasing out of steam engines have resulted in Railways discontinuing their contracts for coal and ash handling in the steam sheds which has been closed. A number of labourers who were engaged on these jobs by the contractors from time to time would have either been discontinued from employment by their employers or may have obtained alternate employment.*

(b) and (c). Yes Sir, Railways have received representations, some of them forwarded by Honourable

Members of Parliament regarding absorption of these coal and ash handling labours in the Railways. Railways have regretted their inability to absorb them in Railway service since Railways have not liability or responsibility for these labourers engaged by private contractors. Moreover, Railways are already saddled with the problem of re-deployment of a large number of regular railway staff rendered surplus on account of closure of steam sheds and of providing alternate employment to a number of casual labours directly engaged by the Railways.

Some of these labourers have also filed civil Appeal Petitions before the Supreme Court for their absorption in Railways. The case is still sub-judice and the final judgement in this case is awaited.

[English]

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, I am very unhappy with the reply that has been given by the hon. Railway Minister. It is stated that it is the responsibility of the private contract to provide employment to the workers who have been rendered jobless as a result of the phasing out of the steam loco shed and related works like handling of coal and ash. I did not at all expect such a reply from an outspoken Railway Minister who is considered to be committed to the cause of the deprived and the downtrodden. It has already been settled through a direction of the Supreme court as long back as in March, 1993 which said that this issue should be considered by the Ministry of Railways. The Supreme Court has directed the then Railway Minister that these workers should be absorbed because they has been serving the Railways at a stretch and without any break for a period ranging between 15 to 25 years. This is a very usual practice followed by the Railways. On the basis of that directive of the Supreme court, as long back as on July 25, 1991 the former Railway Minister has given an assurance, even on the floor of this House, that these workers would be absorbed.

Sir, now the Railways Minister, in his Budget speech, has come out with a scheme - which we all greeted with thumping of our desks - whereby about 56,000 casual workers would be absorbed. These poor people, these six thousand people, many of whom have already died of starvation are in abject misery and no words could describe their condition. They had been doing very very perennial nature of jobs in the Railways. The present Railway minister, when he was the Labour Minister, himself has considered this question. The Assurances Committee has taken up this question and made specific recommendations on the basis of the assurance given by the then Railway Minister and said that these workers doing perennial nature of jobs without any break and at a stretch for a period ranging between 15 to 20 years, will gradually get absorbed in the modernisation schemes of the Railways.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please come to the question.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Railways whether he would consider including these workers also in his scheme of absorption of the casual workers about which he has already stated in his Budget speech.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very important issue and concerns the poor people. I have already announced that we would absorb 56-57 thousand casual labourers. There, where is the question of not considering the cases of 6500 or 6300 labourers as per the findings of the Committee on Assurances? We have two or three problems. First, the Railway Ministry should not go into the technicalities. The Railway Minister never used the word 'labour' in the floor of this House, but used the word 'railway labour' you can go into the record I have seen. It is railway labour.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, my question was with regard to the contract labourers. That was very clear and categorical. When he was replying to the Railway Budget, in reply to the question regarding the contract labourers engaged in coal and ash handling in the steam loco sheds, he said that no worker should be thrown out of job.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : No railway worker.

[Translation]

Sir, you can tell him that nowhere does it make a mention of railways worker... (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, I could prove that.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, in the present perspective, the context should be taken into consideration.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : We have already said, workers from the steam locomotives, not railway workers.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Let him complete his reply.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : That is why I have said that his question was correct, his intention was bonafide. I have read the reply given by the Minister word-by-word. The Minister added the word railway workers while giving the reply. The second point is that he has referred to the Supreme court. The Supreme court has also observed that a human approach should be adopted and added that the exact number of contract labourers is not known, and therefore, laid down a guideline for forming cooperatives and employing these contract labours in those cooperatives. It is true that the committee on Assurance examined this issue and

submitted their interim report, but the Railway Ministry categorically stated that it was not possible to absorb these contract labourers. The Committee on Assurance again recommended their absorption. But we have some difficulties. We have 56,000 casual labourers and we have decided to absorb all of them by 1997 - in one and a half years time. We have set a target of regularisation of 30,000 labourers during the current financial year and the rest of them will be regularised thereafter, besides, we have 6,000 steam loco maintenance staff, we cannot ignore them also. We have a live register with us of those who have been working with Railways for very long, their number also runs into thousands, may be in lakhs. Shri Achariya ji has said that only 6300 workers are involved... (Interruptions). They were working with us where loco shed was functioning. We have still 197 steam engines where these people are still working. Their number may be less now. Once we take a decision to regularise the privates of contract labour, it will not be limited to steam engine or to coal handling staff, it will be extended to those also who have been engaged on earth work, on contract basis. According to a report, there number in 1994 was 6000 which, I think, must have come down to 3000 to 4000 because many of them have become over-aged. So, if we have to absorb 3000-4000 labourers, we will have no difficulty in it we are prepared to do something for them but, once we take a decision to this effect, it will have an adverse affection the interest of those who are already working, who are in our live registers or who are casual labourers. But I have no negative attitude in this regard even today. If he wants that it should be done on priority basis, then he should workout the priority and we shall be absorbing them accordingly.

[English]

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : This is not a question of casual workers' or contract workers' interests. May I know from the hon. Minister, whether it is not a fact that even in the Railways such workers have been absorbed in certain parts of the country? It is not a fact that the Supreme Court had categorically stated, on other occasion, that the workers working at a stretch, without any break - with perennial nature of job - should be absorbed first whenever there is a vacancy? I would like to have a specific reply from the Minister.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : It is true that in one or two cases, they have been absorbed and we will continue to absorb them as and when jobs of this nature become available. These workers belong to our family and are poor. Their cases will definitely be considered.

SHRI DATTA MEGHE : Just now, Paswanji talked of giving employment to contract labourers and loco shed labourers. Does he not propose to give jobs to contract labourers? The Railways can employ these 5-6 thousand

railway signal workers who work even today for more than eight hours daily. As per rules, they are supposed to work for eight hours but they work for more than 12 hours which is illegal. May I know whether or not there 5-6 thousand labourers will be given jobs in the Railways? I have seen in Nagpur that Sweepers are there promoted as clerks or posted elsewhere and the sweeping job is given to some other persons. Whether his Ministry proposed to formulate some code of conduct or frame some regulations for the officers who work in an arbitrary manner and whether he propose to fix equal hour of duty for all the employees?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : The officers should not be held guilty for all the deficiencies. whatever policy we frame that must be implemented. There is no need to employ private workers for scavenging and maintenance duties. if at all we need the services of private people it is needed in hill areas, in the areas in Rajasthan, for the job of construction of bridge over the Ganga but they are not prepared to do this job, they are prepared to work as cleaners. But when we frame a policy that the job of class IV should be given to private workers, then what the officers can do? We have now decided that scavenging and cleaning work will be done by the railways themselves. It will provide work to the employees and make their future secure also we have taken a decision to his effect.

Secondly, the job of handling coal or loading coal is of a permanent nature and therefore, it should not be got done on contract basis. Only these jobs should be got done on contract basis which are of temporary nature and can be finished in three-six months. The work referred to by the hon'ble member is of permanent nature and therefore, the labourers should not be employed for these jobs on contract basis. Otherwise it will be a burden for us and we have to reduce this burden in a phased manner and we are doing this and I have no difference of opinion on his point.

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH : In his reply the Railway Minister has said that because of closure of contracts for the supply of ash, the labourers who were engaged on coal and ash handling have been rendered jobless and secondly a large number of regular railway workers has been rendered surplus because of closure of steam engine sheds. I would like to know from the hon'ble Minister what does he mean by surface labourers and whether they have been removed from the job and if so, the number of such labourers and also the time by which he proposes to absorb those who were working on regular basis?

Secondly, in his reply he has said that the Casual railway workers would be absorbed. The problem of providing alternative job to the casual labourers directly appointed by the railways already exists. So, I would like to know from the hon'ble Minister as to how many such workers were recruited and whether there is any plan to provide them alternative jobs? What will be basis and conditions of their appointment!

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to pay the wages of railway employees and workers whether we take work from them or not. The work has nothing to do with payment. As far as their future is concerned we are going ahead stepwise. It is not an ordinary decision to regularise 57,000 workers in a period of 1 1/2 years. This is a major decision. Had I said that we are going to regularise 10,000 workers, I would have received big applause. Then I don't know whether it would have taken us 5 to 6 years or more to do this job. I took his decision at one go to regularise 57,000 casual labourers within one and a half years that is, by 1997. We have already drawn an action plan in this regard. These workers belong to IV grade, they do not belong to affluent sections. They are from poor families. I want that all these workers should be absorbed as early as possible.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I would like to tell the House that we have taken 35 minutes and could take up only two questions.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please listen to me.

[English]

I could easily pass on to the next question.

[Translation]

This is a very important question and that is why I am giving time. Please ask your questions without taking much time.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, the regularisation of casual workers should not be mixed up with the absorption of six thousand retrenched workers who are engaged in steam loco sheds. My question was very clear and categorical when I intervened while the hon. railway Minister was replying, and it was in regard to the contract workers who are engaged in the steam loco sheds. The reply of the hon. Minister was also very clear. Regarding the loco shed railway workers, he said only workers who were engaged in steam loco shed and who have been rendered surplus or who have been retrenched because of phasing out to steam loco sheds and elimination of steam loco motives, could be redeployed and retained in the Railways. I know, Sir...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : You ask a specific question, please.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : These categories of workers are quite different. They have been doing perennial nature of job. They were doing the same work. They were working for several years. Now if you ask them to go back to their homes to do some other work or agricultural work, they will not be able to do that. I know, a number of workers died of starvation. For railways to absorb three thousand or four thousand workers would not be problem...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please put the question.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : In recent times, the railways have recruited about three thousand casual workers...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I will have to pass on to the next questions, if you do not

(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : They have not given preference to these workers...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Better put the question.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I want to know from the hon. Railway Minister whether he would treat these workers or will he absorb these workers in the Railways because they belong to the backward sections of our society, they belong to tribal and Scheduled Caste communities of our society...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : His question, is there, now you reply.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : They are only three to four thousand workers...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : You have put your question. That is all.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Will the Railways absorb these retrenched workers?...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I will try my best to see.

[Translation]

I have said that I have taken a decision and I am getting the bills prepared one by one. I am on the job. I shall as far as possible, for their absorption on that basis.

[Translation]

Closing Down of Polluting Industrial Units

*363 SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VERMA :

SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has issued directives to remove 168 hazardous industries from Delhi in order to check the environment pollution; and

(b) if so, the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to implement the said orders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) Yes, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in a public interest litigation has delivered an

order on 8th July, 1996 directing that 168 industries operating in the National Capital Territory of Delhi by closed down. The Hon'ble Court has observed:

"...168 industries cannot be permitted to operate and function in Delhi. industries may relocate/shift themselves to any other industrial estate in the NCR. We direct that 168 industries listed above shall stop functions and operating in the city of Delhi with effect from November 30, 1996. These industries shall close down and stop functioning in Delhi with effect from the said date..."

(b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(b) Steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to implement the said order include :

- (i) The Government of Delhi has given wide publicity of the Court Order dated 8.7.1996 giving the list of 168 industries which have been directed by the Court to be closed and relocated with effect from 30.11.1996 in newspapers, radio and television.
- (ii) The Government of Delhi has constituted a nodal agency consisting of Chief Secretaries of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to co-ordinate the relocation of industries.
- (iii) The National Capital Territory Region (NCR) Planning Board has asked Governments (Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) to set up a Single Window Facility for the purpose of providing assistance to the industries in the process of relocation. The Government of Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have already formed such facilities.
- (iv) A Review Committee has been set up in the NCR Planning Board under the Chairmanship of its Members Secretary, with representatives of all the 4 States (Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) in the NCR region.
- (v) The NCR Planning Board has also identified that vacant plots available within the NCR which can be allotted to the relocation industries.

The matter is subjudice

CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD : Yes, Sir, Shri M.C. Mehta, Advocate filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court praying the hon'ble court to issue necessary directions for checking the pollution being spread by some industries in Delhi. The hon'ble Supreme Court delivered an order on 8th July 1996