

Title: Regarding releasing the order for railway wagons by the Ministry of Railway in the current financial year.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Mr. Chairman, Sir, eighty per cent of the wagons required by the Indian Railways are manufactured in West Bengal. Traditionally the wagons are manufactured in West Bengal. There are a number of wagon-manufacturing units located in the State of West Bengal, both in the public sector as well as in the private sector. These wagon-manufacturing units are set up to cater to the needs of the Indian Railways, to supply the wagons. Their main product is railway wagons.

I submit that four months have already lapsed in the current financial year and the orders for the current year have not been released. In the Budget for this year it has been shown that the Indian Railways will be requiring 23,000 wagons this year. I wish to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of State for Railways sitting here to this aspect. The Indian Railways planned to acquire 23,000 wagons in the current year. But the orders for the current year have not yet been released. I know at least about four units in West Bengal where the order book position is nil today. Since April, 2001 their order book position is nil. For the first time the Ministry of Railways has not placed orders for the acquisition of wagons. It is already four months now into the current year.

Sir, I have been here in the Lok Sabha for the last twenty-one years. I have not seen such a situation earlier. For the first time, even after passing of four months in the financial year, the Railways have not placed the order for the wagons. As a result of this, the wagon-manufacturing units of West Bengal – at least four out of seven of them – have been closed down. The workers have not received their salary for the past four months.

There was a meeting in the chamber of the hon. Minister of Railways in the Parliament House. All leaders from all Parties – Congress, Left including CPI(M) attended the meeting. Hon. Minister of State for Communications, Shri Tapan Sikdar also wanted to accompany us. He expressed his support also. We all met the hon. Minister of Railways, Shri Nitish Kumar. In that meeting the Railway officials were there. Both the Chairman, Railway Board and the Member (Mechanical) of the Railway Board were there. In that meeting the hon. Minister of Railways very categorically told the officials that the orders should be released within one week.

Sir, the meeting was held on 25th of July. Today, I got the information from the Railway Board that they are still discussing it. हम लोग चर्चा कर रहे हैं, बात कर रहे हैं। हमने पूछा कि कितने दिन यह बात चलेगी। Sir, there are some officials in the Railway Board who do not want to release the order.

Sir, there was a complaint against the use of inferior quality of steel. We also want that an inquiry should be conducted. We know under whose tenure that happened. Whoever might be the Railway Minister, when some - not all - wagon manufacturing units have used inferior quality of steel and sold out the carton steel in the open market, it should be inquired. The former Railway Minister was aware of this fact. We brought this fact to her notice, but no action was taken and no inquiry was ordered. If the inquiry had been ordered one and a half years back, it would have completed by this time and the people of our country also had been able to know who were responsible for that.

Sir, an inquiry should be held and whoever is responsible should be punished, but pending the inquiry, why should order not be issued? The inquiry was ordered by the present Railway Minister, Shri Nitish Kumar. All the things which have happened in the passed should be inquired into.

When I was the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Railways, we objected to cent per cent tendering system. In 1997, the Ministry of Railways adopted the policy of cent per cent tendering system. Prior to that, there was Wagon India Limited. Wagon India Limited was an umbrella organisation. The main function of the Wagon India Limited was to distribute order among public sector and private sector wagon manufacturing units. Wagon India Limited was wound up during the tenure of the previous Minister. With what motive was it wound up? When Wagon India Limited was there, there was no complaint.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, I have just started. ...(*Interruptions*) Today 'Zero Hour' can continue till 3.30 p.m.

Sir, when Wagon India Limited was there, there was no complaint. Who took the decision to wind up Wagon India Limited should also be inquired into. What was the motive behind that?

Shri Tapan Sikdar has also demanded, I read his statement in the newspaper, that there should be an inquiry in respect of corruption during the tenure of the previous Minister of Railways, the predecessor of Shri Nitish Kumar.

What has happened to that? What we discussed with the Minister is that the inquiry should be held, but the placement of order or the release of order should not be delayed and the Minister agreed with it. Wagon manufacturing units should not suffer for lack of order. This is not the problem of wagon manufacturing units alone where thousands and thousands of workers are engaged. Wagon industry is one of the important industries of West Bengal. There are a large number of small and medium ancillary industries, which are dependent on wagon industry. We had experienced this crisis in wagon industry five years back, and we had seen the plight of the workers. We have not only seen the problems of wagon manufacturers but also of ancillary units.

स्भापति महोदय : सरकार से आपकी क्या अपेक्षा है, वह बताइए।

वाणिज्य और उद्योग मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री तथा रेल मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री दिग्विजय सिंह) : सब बातें इनको पता हैं। एक बात ऐसी नहीं है जो इनसे छिपी हुई है।

श्री बसुदेव आचार्य : हम मांग करते हैं कि जो सिद्धांत दिग्विजय सिंह जी, जो सिद्धांत रेल मंत्री जी ने ऑल पार्टी मीटिंग में लिया था कि एक हफ्ते के अंदर वैगन का ऑर्डर रिलीज़ कर देना चाहिए, कर देंगे, लेकिन क्या अड़चन उसमें हुई?

श्री दिग्विजय सिंह : कोई अड़चन नहीं हुई, उस पर लीगल ओपीनियन ली जा रही है।

श्री बसुदेव आचार्य : आप ले लीजिए।

श्री दिग्विजय सिंह : जितना जल्दी हो सकेगा, उसे लेकर आपके सामने आएं।

श्री बसुदेव आचार्य : हमारे देश के माननीय बैरिस्टर सोमनाथ चटर्जी उस मीटिंग में मौजूद थे। उन्होंने अपनी लीगल ओपीनियन उस समय दी थी, बिना फीस के। अभी फीस देकर आप लीगल ओपीनियन ले रहे हैं, लेकिन श्री सोमनाथ चटर्जी ने एक पैसा नहीं लिया, लेकिन मंत्री जी को लीगल ओपीनियन दी।

श्री दिग्विजय सिंह : जितनी जल्दी से जल्दी लीगल ओपीनियन आ जाएगी, हम उस काम को करेंगे।

श्री बसुदेव आचार्य : हम चाहते हैं कि एक हफ्ते के अंदर वह काम होना चाहिए। आप बताइए क्या एक हफ्ते के अंदर काम हो जाएगा, क्योंकि **the phrase 'as soon as' is very vague.** आप कहिए कम से कम एक हफ्ते के अंदर ऑर्डर रिलीज़ होगा। बोलिये दिग्विजय सिंह जी।

श्री दिग्विजय सिंह : लीगल ओपीनियन उससे पहले आ जाएगी तो एक हफ्ते की बात क्या करते हैं?

श्री बसुदेव आचार्य : एक हफ्ते के पहले ऑर्डर रिलीज़ हो जाएगा, यह दिग्विजय सिंह जी ने बोल दिया। धन्यवाद।