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Title : Protest march and strike by Railway employees in Delhi.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN (KASARGOD): I would like to place before this House some important issues relating to the Railway workers in our country. There are about two lakh posts vacant in the Railways. We know that in every Budget we introduce new railway lines, new railway services but at the same time we see the trend of declining total number of railway employees. About four or five years back, there were 17 lakh Railway employees and now it has come down to 13 lakh. So, these two lakh posts and many of them on the safety side are lying vacant. These posts have to be filled up urgently. Thousands of railway workers have come to Delhi today and they are on strike and are agitating. They are going to place these matters before the Government. So, the matter of filling up the vacant posts have to be taken up very seriously.

As regards other sources, outsourcing has become a very important issue in Railways. Privatisation has come in Railways in different ways and it also denies the actual employment opportunities in Railways. They have been demanding to put a limit of Rs.5 lakh for income tax and also exemption of Fringe Benefit Tax.

As far as the performance of the Railway is concerned, there are cooperative societies which have also become the members of the Railway employees. At the same time, these cooperative societies are functioning in a number of institutions. But the Railway employees are not getting any new share. Therefore, proper election has to be conducted with strict compliance. In our country, the Railway employees are really taking a very active part in the national integration. Therefore, these issues have to be taken up by the Government. The very important issue is with regard to the security aspect. So, all these vacant posts have to be filled up within no time. The Railway Minister should spare some time to discuss these demands with the leaders of employees.