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Title: Need to make the 'Rail Info on SMS' service of Indian Railways toll free.

SHRI ARUNA KUMAR VUNDAVALLI (RAJAHMUNDRY): I wish to bring to the notice of this august House that the India railways have recently started an SMS service "Rail Info on SMS". The service would enable a passenger to know the PNR status, current train-running position, accommodation availability and fare enquiry. For this purpose, a passenger needs to send a SMS regarding the queries to 139 or 54959 and the information would be provided within minutes. It is a praiseworthy effort of the India Railways.

However, the SMS service is not a free service because the passenger is being charged Rs. 3/- per message with all private operators and the state operator MTNL charging Rs. 1/- for the same. With the advent of technology usage, every passenger is depending on mobile phones and SMS services. Generally, an anxious passenger will send a number of SMS to know his PNR status before he departs from his home and every time he has to pay from his pocket an exorbitant rate of Rs. 3/- per SMS. By way of this service, the Indian Railways might be earning handsome revenue. Instead of providing a toll free SMS service to its esteemed customers or with a nominal charge, the India Railways are charging at an exorbitant rate.

I urge upon the Government to review the policy and to make available the SMS service at an affordable rate to the passengers.