

**Speech of Dr. Ram Subhag Singh
Introducing Railway Budget
for 1969-70, on 19th February, 1969.**

Mr. Speaker,

Sir, I rise to present the Railway Budget for 1969-70.

In the Revised Estimates for 1967-68, which were presented to this House a year ago to the day, it was anticipated that after meeting fully all the working expenses and providing Rs. 95 crores for depreciation and Rs. 10 crores for the Pension Fund there would be a net revenue of Rs. 118.49 crores which was Rs. 22.59 crores short of the dividend payable to the General Revenues. When the accounts for the year were closed, the net revenue was reduced to Rs. 110 crores. This deterioration was due primarily to shortfall in Gross Traffic Receipts, and despite a reduction in both working and miscellaneous expenditure. The dividend payable to General Revenues had increased by Rs. 45 lakhs. The gap between net revenue and the dividend due was Rs. 31.53 crores and was met by withdrawal from the Revenue Reserve Fund.

2. I am happy to inform the House that the picture of the current year is somewhat better. Compared to the near stagnation in the last two years, there has been an increase of 5.7 per cent in the average of the general index of industrial production (base 1960=100) in the first eight months of 1968 over 1967. Agricultural production for crop year ending June, 1968, has registered significant improvement in the production of food grains, oilseeds and other crops. The derived demand for rail transport has reflected the improvement in the economy, and in the first nine months of the current financial year 5.5 million tonnes more of revenue-earning goods traffic has been lifted. There is reason to hope that the revenue earning tonnage this year will reach the level of 170.5 million tonnes showing an increase of a little more than 8 million tonnes instead of the 7 million anticipated in the Budget. Taking into account the rationalisation of the coal tariff effected from November last, goods earnings for the current year are expected to be Rs. 21 crores more than the Budget Estimate of Rs. 545 crores. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Railways have been able to carry all the additional traffic in the current year although operation on a number of Zonal Railways was handicapped for several reasons during the course of the year. There were a number of unusually long interruptions in rail communications due to floods - three weeks in July in Rajasthan, four weeks in August on the Bulsar-Baroda section of the Western Railway, about a month in October on the metre gauge line to Assam and over three months on the broad gauge line, and a complete suspension of traffic over a portion of the East Coast route on the Southeastern Railway which took nearly four months to repair. There were other difficulties too, such as those caused by the strike by firemen of the Southern and South Central Railways in July and the 'go slow' attitude of some of the running staff of the Eastern Railway in September. On the details of these I need not dwell, but I would like to make mention of the specially difficult transport demand that was made on the Railways to move large quantities of foodgrains from Punjab and Haryana out of the last bumper harvest gathered in these two States. It was a considerable achievement on the part of the Railways to have moved 1.7 million tonnes of wheat from Punjab and Haryana to various parts of the country within a period of three months, from May to July. This massive movement coupled with the breaches on the Western and South Eastern Railways created difficulties for the movement of coal in the first half of the year. But here again, the special effort made by the Railways bore fruit and they moved about six per cent more coal by December this year than in the corresponding period of the previous year. The higher tempo of movement that has been achieved will be kept up throughout this busy season and I have no reason to doubt that the still higher levels of traffic that we can expect in the next and the following years as the Fourth Five Year Plan gathers momentum will be carried by the Railways with benefit to themselves and to the country's overall economy.

3. While the Railways have done well this year in goods traffic, passenger traffic has been disappointing, with a fall in the first four months of the year as compared to the traffic level of the corresponding period of the previous year. This fall seems to have been due to an early monsoon and breaches I have mentioned earlier. In suburban traffic there was a heavy shift from the booking of single journey tickets to the booking of season tickets obviously because the increase made in the beginning of the year was much less in season ticket fares than in single journey fares. Perhaps, there has also been some diversion of short distance traffic from rail to road due to our having increased the minimum railway fare from 15 to 20 Paise. Frankly speaking, I am not unhappy over these developments since increase in the proportion of season tickets reduces pressure on the booking windows and the diversion of short distance traffic to the road helps in removing congestion on our trains. I may also mention that fares charged for short distances do not cover full costs. Since August, passenger traffic has shown signs of steady revival, but I am not hopeful that the earnings from passenger traffic in the current year will reach the Budget Estimate. of Rs. 278 crores. The Revised Estimate has been placed at Rs. 12 crores less, i.e., at Rs. 266 crores. The Revised Estimate for the Gross Traffic Receipts for the current year is placed at Rs. 902.15 crores which makes for an improvement of Rs. 9.65 crores on the Budget Estimate.

4. There is an increase of about Rs. 26 crores in the Ordinary Working Expenses. The bulk of the increase is in the staff bill due to the last revision of dearness allowance from September 1968 accounting for Rs. 6.91 crores, revised rates of travelling and running allowances from first March 1968 accounting for Rs. 3.92 crores and merger of a portion of dearness allowance with pay from December 1968 accounting for Rs. 4.92 crores. These increases make a total of Rs. 15.75 crores. But against this we have been able to secure some economies. The net increase in the staff bill comes to Rs. 11.25 crores. I will not like to burden the Hon'ble Members with further details of the increases in expenditure beyond mentioning just a few items where the increases have been sizeable -that on repairs and maintenance of Rs. 6.09 crores of which repairs to flood damage account for Rs. 3.29 crores, on hire for telecommunication facilities belonging to Posts and Telegraphs Department including some additional arrear payments amounting to Rs. 1.50 crores, and on fuel of Rs. 4.79 crores mainly on account of increase in prices of coal, excise duty on diesel oil and increase in electricity tariffs. Hon'ble Members will appreciate that the entire increase in Ordinary Working Expenses is due to post-budget developments over which the Railways have had no control. In fact, the total of these increases is significantly more than the actual increase in the Revised Estimate of Ordinary Working Expenses, and I am happy to point out to the House that the Railways' efforts for achieving economy have begun to bear some fruit. In 1967-68 there was no increase in the total number of staff and in the current year. I am expecting that the increase will be proportionately less than the expected increase of eight million tonnes in traffic. This is encouraging since nearly two-thirds of the working expenses is on staff. I shall spare no effort to impress on the Railways that they must continue to exert themselves to the utmost to raise the productivity of the staff.

5. Taking advantage of the reduction of about Rs. 6 crores in the estimate of expenditure chargeable to the Depreciation Reserve Fund, I have reduced the contribution to the Fund by Rs. 5 crores, i.e., from the Budget Estimate of Rs. 100 crores to Rs. 95 crores.

6. In the ultimate picture the Revised Estimates show that after meeting fully all the working expenses and providing Rs. 95 crores for depreciation and Rs. 10 crores for the Pension Fund we will be left with a net revenue of Rs. 141.32 crores which will be short by only Rs. 10.01 crores of our dividend liability of Rs. 151.33 crores and this shortfall will be met from the Revenue Reserve Fund. I can assure the House that with the post-budget burdens thrown on them, the Railways could not have done any better.

7. The Works Programme for the current year was for a net expenditure of Rs. 272 crores. The Revised Estimate is Rs. 15 crores less. There is a reduction of Rs. 9 crores under rolling stock, of about Rs. 3 crores under stores, suspense and of Rs. 4 crores under manufacture and miscellaneous advances suspense. A further reduction in the net expenditure has been contributed by an increase of about Rs. 5 crores under Other Credits. These reductions have been offset by increase of about Rs. 1½ crores under electrification and sundry increases under some other heads. I may mention that it seems very unlikely that deliveries of wagons from the private sector will exceed 14,500 against 16,800 provided for in the budget. This accounts for a saving of Rs. 1.85 crores.

8. While on the Works Programme, I would like to make a brief mention of the principal works completed or in progress in this year. The remaining portion of the Salem-Bangalore line from Dharmapuri to Bangalore of the Southern Railway, the Dhrangadhra-Halvad portion of the Jhunda-Kandla broad gauge link of the Western Railway and the broad gauge line from Reuigunta to Tirupati of the Southern Railway have been opened to traffic, and more recently the Delhi voiding Line of the Northern Railway. Other constructions are progressing according to schedule. The conversion of the Miraj-Kolhapur section of the South Central Railway from meter to broad gauge has been taken up. 300 kilometres of new double line are expected to be opened to traffic in the current year and 850 kilometres are at various stages of progress. The programme of modernization of signalling is going ahead and the expansion of the microwave network on important trunk routes so important for the improvement of train operation, figures in the Works Programme both of the current year and the next. Electrification of the Nandgaon-Bhusaval section of the Central Railway is expected to be completed this year and that of the Andul-Calcutta Chord link of the Eastern railway during the next year. Work is proceeding on the Kanpur-Tundla section of the Northern Railway and Rourkela-Durg section of the South Eastern Railway and fieldwork is expected to commence soon on the Virar-Sabarmati section of the Western Railway.

9. I come now to the Budget for 1969-70. Proceeding on the experience of the current year and the best projection that we have been able to make at present of the traffic level likely to be attained on the Railways at the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan our present expectation is that the Railways will lift about 9 million tonnes of additional revenue earning traffic next year. I expect that the revival of passenger traffic will be maintained and there will be an increase of about 3% next year. I expect goods earnings to be Rs. 600 crores, passenger earnings to be Rs. 273 crores, other coaching earnings Rs. 47.5 crores and sundry earnings Rs. 30.5 crores. After allowing for an increase in unrealised earnings of about Rs. 4.2 crores, the

budget estimate of Gross Traffic Receipts for the next year has been placed at Rs. 946.8 crores, making for an increase of about Rs. 45 crores over this year. Ordinary Working Expenses have been estimated at Rs. 665.35 crores about Rs. 25 crores higher than of this year of which Rs. 22.65 crores will be on staff cost, for the same reasons for which there has been increase in staff cost in the current year, viz. increase in Dearness Allowance, merger of a portion of Dearness Allowance with pay, and increase in running and travelling allowances. There will also be the usual increase on account of annual increments. There will be an increase of Rs. 4.28 crores in the expenditure on fuel both because of the increase in the price of coal and for carrying the anticipated additional traffic.

10. I propose retaining the appropriations to the Depreciation Reserve Fund and to the Pension Fund at the same level as in the current year, viz. Rs. 95 crores and Rs. 10 crores respectively. According to the Budget Estimates the net revenue is expected to be Rs. 160.92 crores which will leave a surplus of a little under Rs. 2 crores after discharging fully the estimated dividend liability of Rs.159.01 crores, nearly Rs. 8 crores more than of last year. Considerable care having been taken in the formulation of the Budget Estimates, I can hope that unless costs increase for reasons on which the Railways do not have control, the anticipated surplus will actually be realised.

11. The estimate of Works Expenditure for the next year is Rs. 255 crores, of which Rs. 132.6 crores is chargeable to Capital, Rs. 95 crores to Depreciation Reserve Fund, Rs. 19 crores to the Development Fund and Rs. 8.4 crores to Revenue. Of this, rolling stock and machinery, including advances to manufacturers for materials account for about Rs. 118 crores and net expenditure on works is expected to amount to Rs. 134 crores, and it is hoped to achieve a reduction of about Rs. 4 crores under 'Inventories'. The Works Programme has been kept at a reasonable minimum level.

12. Among the important new works included in the programme are the doubling of some more patches on the Grand Trunk route between Agra and Bina on the Central Railway, and between Kazipet and Balharshah on the South Central Railway, some patches between Jalarpet and Cochin on the Southern Railway and between Alnia and Kota on the Western Railway. The restoration of the railway line between Thurbhita and Bhaptiahi on the Northeastern Railway and the doubling of the Rajabehra-Bokaro Steel City and Muri-Hatia sections of the Southeastern Railway to serve the requirements of the Bokaro Steel Plant are also in the programme.

13. We are at the threshold of the Fourth Five Year Plan. The best projection of traffic growth that we have been able to make at present in consultation with the Planning Commission and the concerned Ministries indicates an increase of 62 million tonnes over the traffic of the current year at the end of the Fourth Plan. More than half of this increase will be contributed by movements of raw materials to the steel plants including coal, coal for other consumers and iron ore for export, the balance being made up of other goods including about 3 million tonnes of finished products from steel plants and 3 million tonnes of cement.

The capacity created to handle the Third Plan's projected heavy traffic of raw materials and finished products of steel plants and large increase of traffic in coal from East India to Western India had remained only partially utilised and depressed the Railways' financial position. With the hopeful prospects of increase of traffic in raw materials to the steel plants and coal we can expect the Railways' financial position to improve during the Fourth Plan provided, as I have already said increase in wages and prices does not affect the position as it has in recent years.

The strategy of development we are proposing to follow during the Fourth Five Year Plan will aim at securing the fullest utilisation of the assets that we have already created or acquired, whether it be line capacity or improved marshalling facilities or modernisation of traction, signalling and workshop facilities or rolling stock. Through better utilisation of these assets we shall obtain higher productivity from our manpower resources also and the two together will, we hope, contribute substantially towards economy of scale such as was achieved year after year in the Second Plan and the early years of the Third Plan when traffic had been steadily increasing. This process was halted in the last three years when traffic ceased to grow. But though I see reason to take an optimistic view of the coming years, we will have to be very selective in incurring capital expenditure so as to ensure that while the Railways shall not lack the capacity to carry the growing goods traffic during the Fourth Five Year Plan, premature or unremunerative investments are scrupulously avoided and a well-conceived order of priorities is followed to get the maximum and early benefit, both in physical and financial terms, from the new investments. With this objective we have undertaken, several engineering and traffic surveys in respect of various proposals for increasing line capacity, marshalling facilities, construction of new rail links and conversion of meter to broad gauge. Some more surveys will be taken up next year. These careful engineering and traffic surveys and full examination of the economic benefit and financial return from investment proposals will provide adequate basis for decision to implement any of them.

The growing suburban traffic in and to the metropolitan cities of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi has been putting increasing strain on the suburban Railway services. I am conscious of the need for a more radical solution of this problem. The problems of Calcutta and Bombay need to be given first priority. In consultation with the Planning Commission it has been agreed that subject to further examination of what financial and operational responsibility should ultimately devolve on the Railways in the matter, the Railways should take up a survey for the final location and detailed planning of the suburban dispersal line in Calcutta, a survey for a third terminal in Ballard Estate in Bombay, and a techno-economic feasibility study for a mass rapid transit system in Calcutta, while a survey for the by-pass on the Kurla-Mankhurd Section of the Central Railway has already been done.

14. I have been able to present to the House a budget estimate for the next year with a small surplus of nearly Rs. 2 crores after meeting fully the Railways' dividend liability to the General Revenues, estimated at Rs. 159 crores. I am not proposing any increase in fares and freights. But I should remind the House that this slight improvement in the budgetary position has come after three successive years of depressed financial position of the Railways. Although the Railways have been able to meet fully the dividend liability in all these years by drawing from the Revenue Reserve Fund, the Fund is now left with only a nominal balance of Rs. 1.29 crores. The Development Fund had been completely used up last year and we will not be able to make any contribution to the Fund this year and hardly any in the next. By the end of 1969-70 we would be borrowing from the General Revenues Rs. 45.80 crores on account of Development Fund expenditure. Fortunately, the position of the Depreciation Reserve Fund is relatively satisfactory. It is expected to have a balance of Rs. 86.01 crores at the end of the current year and Rs. 92.30 crores at the end of 1969-70. The balance in the Pension Fund at the end of the current year will be Rs. 62.55 crores an adequate for meeting current liabilities. But with a substantial number of railway employees opting this year for the Pension scheme in preference to the Provident Fund and with the merger of a portion of Dearness Allowance with pay, pensioners liabilities will increase significantly and therefore, our contributions to the Pension Fund will have to increase in the coming years.

15. I have brought these facts to the notice of the House so that the House can appreciate that very sizeable surpluses will have to be generated by the Railways in the coming years. The loan taken from the General Revenues for the Development Fund expenditure will have to be repaid and enough surpluses will have to be generated to again build up an adequate balance in the Development Fund. Further, like all other public undertakings, the Railways will also have to contribute their share of the resources necessary for financing the Fourth Plan. I earnestly hope that in this task of strengthening the financial position of the Railways we will be helped by a steady growth and buoyancy in the country's economy in the coming years and the recession will soon have become a matter of the past. On the part of the Railways no effort will be spared to improve the efficiency of operation, to secure more high-rated traffic and provide an increasingly customer-oriented service. The newly created Marketing and Sales Organisation in each Zonal Railway has been doing useful work in securing high-rated traffic and in extending container services. A new five-tonne container service was introduced between Madras and Bangalore in January this year and we expect to soon introduce container services between Delhi-Howrah, Bombay-Madras and Bombay-Secunderabad. A new scheme of freight forwarders under which the collection and delivery services are performed by road hauliers and the line haulage is provided by the Railways has commenced between Delhi and Bombay. If this experiment proves successful, we intend extending this scheme to other trunk routes and it should prove a step forward in rail-road coordination and should benefit both the road hauliers and the Railways.

16. I would like to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Members to the problem of ticketless travel which is fairly widespread. Every month over nine lakhs of passengers are detected travelling without tickets. This deprives Railways of several crores of revenue and has also become a law and order problem. While a massive drive has been launched with the help of State Governments and the Railway Protection Force against this evil and some encouraging results have been achieved, it is necessary to tighten the penalties against the ticket dodgers. A bill to this effect is coming up before the House and I would appeal for this legislation to be passed as expeditiously as possible.

17. As the House is aware, the Railway Board had initiated some time ago several cost studies into various aspects of railway working. The results of these studies have become available now and the question of rationalising the fare and freight structure has been under examination by a senior officer of the rank of Additional Member. The purpose of the study is to determine on the one hand the best way of bringing the freight and fare structure in line with the results of the cost studies and on the other, tailoring them to the needs of economy. The objective of promoting railroad coordination will also be borne in mind. While undertaking the rationalisation of the freight and fare structure on these lines, it should also be possible to raise resources for meeting the development requirements of the railways and of the economy.

18. The three rolling-stock production units of the Railways have been functioning satisfactorily. The

Chittaranjan Locomotive Works expect to turn out about 68 steam locomotives 53 electric locomotives and 24 diesel shunters during this year and to increase their production to 70 steam locomotives 60 electric locomotives and 48 diesel shunters next year. The Integral Coach Factory at Madras is expected to build 730 coach shells and furnish 634 of them during the current year and 740 and 670 respectively next year. The Diesel Locomotive Works at Varanasi are expected to manufacture 68 Broad Gauge and 10 Metre Gauge locomotives during the current year and 75 and 30 respectively next year. All the three production units have taken up some, new lines of production, metre gauge locomotives and diesel shunters in Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, electric multiple units and railcars in the integral. Coach Factory and metre gauge diesel locomotives in Diesel Locomotive Works. The value of their total output exceeds Rs. 59 crores per year.

19. In addition to giving technical advice to the Railways, the Research, Designs and Standards Organization at Lucknow has been engaged during the year on studies in the performance of the vacuum and compressed air brakes and investigations connected with raising the speeds of mail and express trains. It has evolved a number of new designs of locomotives and coaching and goods stock and has been actively assisting the State Trading Corporation in their effort to export wagons. It has also undertaken inspection of equipment and materials not only for internal requirements but also for export, as in the case of rails to Iran, wheelsets for the Korean wagon order, bogie tank wagons for Ceylon, etc.

20. During the current year up to end of October 1968, 23 new trains have been introduced, 13 on the Broad Gauge and 10 on the Metre Gauge, and the runs of 22 existing trains, 8 on the Broad Gauge and 14 on the Metre Gauge, have been extended. As regards suburban services, 33 new trains have been introduced 24 on the Broad Gauge and 9 on the Metre Gauge and the runs of 10 trains extended. I am not oblivious to the fact that the suburban services particularly in Bombay area, need further augmentation and improvement and it will be our endeavour to do so, but we have been handicapped by the need to replace a large number of old E.M.U. coaches in service in the Bombay suburban area and our difficulty at present to produce such coaches in larger numbers. Nevertheless, the Bombay Railways are also studying the feasibility of running twelve-coach suburban trains which would substantially relieve the peak hour overcrowding. A number of new long distance trains have also been introduced accounting for over 3000 train kilometres per day, including the Paschim Express between Bombay Central and Amritsar. It is proposed to introduce Rajdhani Express, a biweekly service, between New Delhi and Howrah, which will cover the distance in less than 18 hours. About, 115 Third Class Sleeper coaches have been added to the 1,260 in service at the beginning of this year and more are to be built next year.

21. Hon'ble Members are aware that all the Railways except the North Eastern and the Northeast Frontier Railways are organised on the Divisional pattern. With the increasing complexity of railway operation and the increases in workload expected during the Fourth Plan period, it has become necessary to introduce the Divisional system on these two Railways also. The North Eastern Railway will have four Divisions with headquarters at Izatnagar, Lucknow, Varanasi and Samastipur which last will include the West Katihar District of the North Eastern Railway. So far as the Northeast Frontier Railway is concerned, all the operating Districts are being upgraded to Divisions except that at Tinsukia there will be only a Transportation Division till the workload justifies its becoming a full Division.

22. Most of the recommendations of the Railway Catering and Passenger Amenities Committee under the Chairmanship of my colleague Shri Parimal Ghosh, which reported in February 1968, are in the process of implementation and will, it is hoped, lead to greater customer satisfaction with the Catering Services. Packed meals of various kinds are now being supplied to the travelling public and if these find favour with them it may be possible to release some capacity now taken up by restaurant cars and provide instead more accommodation for passengers on important trains. In 1967-68, departmental catering on the Indian Railways made a profit of about Rs. 6 lakhs on a sales turnover of about Rs. 6 crores and it is hoped that this margin will increase this year.

23. Hon'ble Members must have seen Part I of the Report of the Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri K. N. Wanchoo, retired Chief Justice of India, which has been reviewing the position of accidents on the Indian Railways since the appointment of the Railway Accidents Committee, 1962 (Kunzru Committee). In this report the Committee has noted the significant decrease of about 35% in the average annual number of accidents during the five years ending 1967-68 as compared to the six-year period ending 1962-63. A statement containing a summary of the observations and recommendations made by the Committee in their Report and the views of the Ministry of Railways thereon is being circulated to Hon'ble Members.

24. The high powered Committee on Security and Policing on Railways under the Chairmanship of Shri Shantilal Shah submitted its report on 10th October, 1968. The recommendations in this report, some of them very far reaching, are now under study.

25. Several decisions taken this year have improved the service conditions of railway staff substantially. The merger with pay of the full Dearness Allowance at the twelve-monthly average price index of 175 has substantially increased the pension payable to staff on retirement as well as the Government contribution to the Provident Fund of those who have not opted for the pension scheme. It has also increased their entitlement to House Rent Allowance, City Compensatory Allowance and Travelling Allowance. The fates of travelling allowance and running allowance have also considerably increased after their revision with effect from 1st March 1968. A fresh opportunity has been given to Railway employees who are still on the Provident Fund scheme of retirement benefits to opt for the pension scheme and the date for such option has been extended to 31st March 1969 following the decision for merger of a portion of Dearness Allowance with pay. In response to the request of the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen, and in consultation with them, a one-man tribunal has been constituted to go into certain demands of the Federation on which agreement could not be reached by the Permanent Negotiating Machinery of Railway Labour and the Railway Board. The demands cover, among others, the scope, and rates of the night duty allowance, the wages paid to casual labour, the hours of work and holidays for clerks at stations, sheds and depots, a review of the present hours of employment and of the scales of pay of running staff and the emoluments of gangmen etc. Shri N. M. Miabhoy, retired Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court, will constitute the one man Tribunal. I have been aware that some relief may be necessary to staff who have been at the maximum of their pay scales for some time. This matter has been under our consideration and relief will be provided which may be found to be necessary in addition to airy benefits that may come from the recommendations of the one-man Tribunal. The emoluments and prospects of Railway officers were falling out of line with those of comparable Central Services and some adjustments in the cadre have been made recently and a few others are under consideration, at a relatively insignificant cost, to remedy this situation, so that Railway services continue to attract their due hare of available talent and those now in service feel that, they are getting a fair deal.

26. As in previous years welfare measures for staff, particularly medical facilities to railway employees and their families, have been augmented during the current year. A hospital has been built at Lalgargh on the Bikaner Division of the Northern Railway and two Health Units on the Northeast Frontier Railway and one on the Southern Railway have been converted into hospitals. 528 general beds and 120 tuberculosis beds have been added during the current year. The number of specialised units for diagnosis and treatment are being increased and additional equipment has been provided in railway hospitals. The retired railway employees contributory health scheme has been extended to cover the dependent children of retired employees also. The railway medical services are participating actively in the family planning programme and the response from railway staff has been encouraging. The expansion of railway schools has continued as also the utilisation of the subsidised hostels, the scholarships for technical education and the services of mobile libraries etc. Sports activities continued to be assisted, and the Railways won eight National Championships and 24 railwaymen were members of the Indian teams which participated in international contests. Six railwaymen won the coveted Arjuna Award in 1967.

27. Relations between organised labour and the Railway Administration were generally cordial during the year and the Permanent Negotiating Machinery continued to function usefully. I have had the pleasure of being associated with the working of the Railways in the past and had come to acquire a high opinion of the calibre of railwaymen of all ranks. I trust that in my renewed association with them, I shall have opportunity to form a still better opinion of their ability and devotion to duty and that they will continue to give of their best to the Railways and the Country.

Hon'ble Members will share my great concern that the Railways are increasingly becoming the target of attack and violence arising from diverse matters not even remotely connected with the Railways or their operation. This most disconcerting trend seems, if at all, to be on the increase. I need not catalogue the numerous instances of such lawless activities which have been making the task of railwaymen increasingly difficult and hazardous and are becoming a growing impediment to railway operation. Quite often our efforts to improve rail services are thwarted by these activities and by damage done to our rolling stock and installations. In sharing my worries with the Hon'ble Members I would appeal to leaders of public opinion in and outside the House to lend their weight so that the Railways can run smoothly in every corner of the Country.
