

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I am appealing to all the Leaders to ensure that the Question Hour is not disturbed everyday. The Members should cooperate.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR (Baramati) : Sir, the issue raised by the hon. Member from Rashtriya Janata Dal party is a very important one. There is a definite time limit stipulated that by such and such time, the Government of India has to take a decision on appeal. This particular subject was discussed with the hon. Speaker. The hon. Speaker has given consent that we could raise this issue after the Question Hour. Therefore, it is our responsibility to raise this issue after the Question Hour only. My request to all my colleagues is that Question Hour be allowed to go on.

[Translation]

SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : I should also be given an opportunity to make my submission.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Sharmaji, you will be allowed after the Question Hour.

11.02 hrs.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Route Diversion of Mangla Express

*522. SHRI VAIKO : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

- (a) the reasons for diversion of Mangla Express via Konkan Railway line;
- (b) whether the Government are aware that the Mangla Express is the only train running through the business centres in Tamil Nadu like Coimbatore, Salem from Delhi with reservation facility in those stations;
- (c) whether the Government are aware that Kerala Express running via Coimbatore does not have reservation facility at Coimbatore;
- (d) whether the Government direct the authorities to run Mangla Express on its original route;
- (e) whether the Government provide reservation facility for Delhi bound Kerala Express at Coimbatore for convenience of passengers; and
- (f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR) : (a) to (f) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (f) Mangala Express is being diverted via Konkan Railway w.e.f. 1.8.1998 to derive the benefits of shorter distance thereby saving running time to an extent of about 12 hrs. between Hazrat Nizamuddin and Mangalore. Apart from Mangala Express, Train No. 6687/6688 Navyug Express, 6343/6344 Swarnajayanti Express and 6317/6318 Himsagar Express are providing 3 days a week service between Tamil Nadu and Delhi with reservation facility. At present, reservation facility at Coimbatore in Kerala Express is not available as passengers can travel by Mangala Express. However, such reservation facility to Coimbatore passengers is being provided by Kerala Express in view of diversion of Mangala Express via Konkan Railway from 1.8.1998. In view of the benefit of reduced transit time to the passengers, running of Mangala Express on its original route is not considered feasible.

SHRI VAIKO : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Railway Minister has stated in his reply that Mangala Express is being diverted via Konkan Railway to derive the benefits of a shorter distance. I fully appreciate it. We are not against running Mangala Express on this diverted line. However, the city of Coimbatore, which is known as the Manchester of the South and the textile capital, is being deprived of the facilities which it has been enjoying all these years. Not only the Mangala Express, six other trains which were running on this route have also been diverted. The trains diverted are: Cochin-Kurla Express; Mangala Express; Ernakulam-Nizamuddin Express; Trivandrum-Gandhidham Express; Cochin-Rajkot Express; Trivandrum-Rajkot Express; and the superfast Trivandrum-New Delhi Rajdhani Express. All these trains were running via Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode, Salem and Jolarpet. These areas are known for foundry industries, knitting industries, textile industries, and powerloom and handloom industries.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Vaiko, please come to the question.

SHRI VAIKO : Sir, the whole textile belt is terribly affected because these trains have been diverted. On the other hand, the Minister, in his written reply, gave a misleading report that Navyug Express, Swarnajayanti Express and Himsagar Express are providing three-days-a-week service between Tamil Nadu and New Delhi. These trains have been running for quite some time. These are not new trains.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Vaiko, what is your question? If you do not put your question, I will have to disallow your question.

SHRI VAIKO : We have lost the facilities of six trains. After cancelling six trains, an impression is being sought to be created that three new trains have been provided. This is not at all true. These trains have been running all

these years. The only thing that was not there was Navyug Express touching Coimbatore.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Vaiko, if you do not come to your question, I will have to disallow you.

SHRI VAIKO : Sir, because of this diversion of trains a serious problem has come up for people living in those areas. The whole textile belt is fully agitated on this issue. The people of the area are terribly agitated because they are not able to go to Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Delhi, etc.

MR. SPEAKER : This is too much, Shri Vaiko. This is not a discussion. Please ask your question.

SHRI VAIKO : Sir, because of the diversion of the six trains, the people cannot hereafter go to Mumbai, Ahmedabad and New Delhi. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is prepared to provide a new train each on this route, from Coimbatore to New Delhi, and from Coimbatore to Mumbai. If these new trains are not provided, we will be terribly affected. He is an able Minister and a very good friend of mine. I never expected to get such a raw deal from him. I urge upon the Minister to provide at least these two new trains. Will you consider my request, Mr. Minister?

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Sir, first of all I would like to refute the charge that I have misled the House. The hon. Member should have read the answer carefully. I have not misled the House, I have given correct information.

So far as the diversion of Mangla Express through Konkan route is concerned, I would like to say that Mangla Express was running from New Delhi to Mangalore and after opening up of the Konkan route due to popular demand of that area - as it shortens the running time and also the distance - that decision was taken. That was a correct decision. I appreciate his sentiments but he is not factually correct. Mangla Express used to provide in altogether 257 berths serving Coimbatore, Erode, Salem and Katpadi belt now. We are providing good service to this area through Kerala Express. Now, they are being provided with 250 berths. That is all I want to say. . . . (Interruptions)

SHRI VAIKO : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I seek your protection. Sir, the hon. Minister has not replied to the main question. There were six trains. . . . (Interruptions) I seek your protection because the hon. Minister has not replied to my basic question of diversion of Mangla Express. All these years, these six trains are running through this route. I am not opposed to Konkan Railways but at the same time, I would like to say that these trains have been diverted. The people in this particular area who want to travel to Gujarat, Mumbai and New Delhi, they cannot avail the facility. . . . (Interruptions) He has stated in his statement as if these six trains are new trains. These trains are

already running. These six trains which have already been running have been diverted now. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister at least to cater to the needs of the travelling public, one new train from Coimbatore to New Delhi, and another new train from Coimbatore to Mumbai should be provided, Will the hon. Minister consider my requests?

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Sir, Mangla Express is going to be extended up to Ernakulam. So far as connectivity to Mumbai is concerned, we proposed to extend this Kurla-Bangalore Express up to Coimbatore.

So far as New Delhi is concerned, Karala Express will serve sufficiently. It will cater to the needs of this area.

SHRI VAIKO : Kerala Express is not a new train. It is already running.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : So far as introduction of new train from Coimbatore to New Delhi is concerned. . . . (Interruptions)

SHRI VAIKO : What will happen to these people who want to travel to New Delhi from Coimbatore? . . . (Interruptions)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : They can travel by Kerala Express.

SHRI VAIKO : Kerala Express is already there. . . . (Interruptions)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Sir, we can discuss it outside the House. . . . (Interruptions)

SHRI VAIKO : We have no grouse against you. We are not against Konkan Railway. . . . (Interruptions) Kindly tell me, will you consider this demand for a new train from Coimbatore to New Delhi? Mr. Minister, will you kindly consider this request? . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : He wants a specific answer.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : I will consider his request sympathetically. . . . (Interruptions)

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Mangla Express originates from Mangalore, my Parliamentary constituency. It connects Mangalore with New Delhi. Now, diversion of this Mangla Express through the Konkan Railway route is a welcome measure because that would shorten the distance and that would also speed up the journey. I fully support the measure taken by the hon. Minister. . . . (Interruptions) Now, the journey of the train will be extended from Mangalore upto Ernakulam. There also we have no objection. My only apprehension is, the number of berths allotted to Mangalore may be affected because of the extension of the journey from Mangalore down South up to Ernakulam.

Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Railway Minister whether he would ensure that the number of berths allotted to Mangalore would be reserved. . . . (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Dhananjaya Kumar, you can ask only one supplementary.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Sir, the timings of the trains, touching Mangalore, also will be altered. The trains during the downward journey would be reaching Mangalore in the midnight.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Kumar, is it the way of putting a supplementary?

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR : Sir, it is connected with that. During the upward journey also it would reach Mangalore in the night.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether suitable arrangements would be made to safeguard the travelling public from Mangalore, who would like to travel by this Mangla Express.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Sir, it is not a question, it is a suggestion. But so far as people of Mangalore are concerned, they are not going to be affected.

SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA : Sir, because of this diversion of the Mangla Express, the people of Nellore are suffering a lot. Most of the business people from there go to Kerala and Delhi. I would request the hon. Minister, instead of this diversion of the Mangla Express, let him provide one more train or, at least, give a stoppage of Kerala Express at Nellore.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : I have already replied, Sir.

SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA : Sir, there is no stoppage of Kerala Express at Nellore . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI C.P. RADHAKRISHNAN : Sir, thank you very much for this opportunity. A product of total revolution Shri Nitish Kumar has cancelled six trains belonging to my Constituency and is not giving me, at least, one new train. I am appealing to all the Members of this House that if a Member loses six trains, can he go back to his Constituency without any problem. This is going to create a great law and order problem in my Constituency.

So, I would request the hon. Minister to introduce, at least, two new trains, one from Palakkad to Mumbai and one from Palakkad to Delhi.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Sir, it seems that the hon. Member has not fully listened to my reply. I have already stated that Kurla-Mangalore . . . (*Interruptions*) Sir, again he is not listening to me. I have said that Kurla-Mangalore Express is going to be extended up to Coimbatore.

SHRI T.R. BAALU : When?

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Very soon . . . (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Baalu, please take your seat. . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Sir, Shri Baalu is unnecessarily poking his nose into this question. He has a different problem . . . (*Interruptions*) Shri Baalu is trying to make his presence felt in this House . . . (*Interruptions*) He has problem in Chennai, we will separately look into that.

But so far as the question of hon. Member from Coimbatore is concerned, he should have listened to me carefully. I have already replied that Kurla-Bangalore train is going to be extended up to Coimbatore. So far as a new train from Coimbatore to Delhi is concerned, I have replied to the supplementary put by Shri Vaiko that I would consider it.

SHRI C. GOPAL : Mr. Speaker Sir, Mangla Express is running for the past five years only. Now the Railway Minister has diverted it through Konkan railway. It was passing through my Constituency, Arakkonam. Now, because of this diversion, people, particularly business people, belonging to eight districts of Tamil Nadu have been affected.

The hon. Minister has replied that he would extend some trains to this area. I would like to bring it to the notice of the hon. Minister that this extension is not sufficient. Even though Mangla Express was running, several business people were affected because they were not getting tickets. Therefore, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether a new train will be introduced from Nizamuddin to Mangalore or from Nizamuddin to Palakkad.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Sir, I have already replied.

SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Sir, with the commissioning of the Konkan railway line, not only Mangla Express but also almost all the North-bound trains are being diverted along the Konkan route including the prestigious Rajdhani Express. It is impossible to accommodate any new train on the single line from Mangalore to Shoranur because of these diversions, increase in the frequency of passenger and goods trains. It has already been over-saturated. Train services are in a hopeless mess. Not only that, but also, all the trains along this route are getting delayed for hours together. Physical fights between agitated passengers and also poor railway officials are taking place everyday. This has become the order of the day. Under these circumstances, I would like to know from the hon. Minister what positive steps are being taken by the Minister to ensure punctuality of trains on the line from Mangalore to Shoranur.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : So far as this question is concerned, the hon. Member is aware that there was a

discussion with all the hon. Members of Parliament from Kerala. They have also emphasized that Mangalore-Shoranur doubling should be expedited. We are on the job. Due to this undergoing construction work of doubling from Mangalore to Shoranur, there is a problem. There is speed restriction at different levels and that is why, the trains are getting delayed. But if there is a fight everyday, we will definitely look into it and take the hon. Member's help also.

SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : My help is always there at your disposal.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Sir, the hon. Member, Shri Vaiko has expressed a view which is the view of many passengers who were using the erstwhile Mangla Express through the earlier route. There is a very easy solution. There is already one Swarnajayanti Express which is a weekly train. It is running once a week only. You can easily make it a daily train. If you make it a daily train, that will cater to Shri Radhakrishnan's constituency as well as about eight States which will be benefitted. Will you be able to consider this positively?

MR. SPEAKER : This is a suggestion.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : I have already replied.

Setting up of N.S.C.

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*523. SHRI NADENDLA BHASKARA RAO :
SHRI MADHUKAR SIRPOTDAR :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to refer to the reply given to USQ No. 3421 on July 9, 1998 regarding National Security Council and state :

(a) the date on which the Task Force submitted its Report to the Government;

(b) the details of the recommendations;

(c) the details of the recommendations accepted and rejected by the Government, separately;

(d) whether the Government have since taken a decision to set up the proposed "National Security Council" and if so, its composition with arms and objectives;

(e) whether a decision to induct nuclear weapons in the Army has also been taken; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) The Task Force submitted its report to the Government on June 25, 1998.

(b) to (d) The matter is under consideration of the Government.

(e) and (f) It will not be in the interest of national security to divulge information in this regard.

SHRI NADENDLA BHASKARA RAO : Mr. Speaker. Sir, the Question is regarding setting up of the National Security Council. Of course, the hon. Minister has mentioned the date on which the Task Force has submitted its Report and all those things, but the details of the recommendations are not given. The hon. Minister has not mentioned what were the recommendations which were accepted and what were the recommendations which were rejected. I would like to know whether there is a decision to set up the National Security Council at all. If it is so, its composition may kindly be explained. Who will be the members? What are the activities of the National Security Council? Was there any decision to set up the National Security Council? All these things should be explained.

Regarding the last Question, of course, in the interest of the nation, the hon. Minister has said that they should not be disclosed. I agree with that. With regard to the nuclear weapons, I forego that part. But he may kindly elaborate the rest of the Question regarding the setting up of the National Security Council, and the composition of the Council.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, when I said that the matter is under the consideration of the Government, it was implied that till the Government has taken a total view of the Report of the Task Force and come to certain conclusions, it would not be proper for me to make any statement.

SHRI NADENDLA BHASKARA RAO : No, I have requested the hon. Minister to elaborate the recommendations made by the Task Force. If the recommendations were given, what were the recommendations which were accepted and what were the recommendations which were rejected?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : That is precisely the point. The matter is under consideration. Acceptance and rejection will arise only when a final view is taken on the Report.

SHRI NADENDLA BHASKARA RAO : Once accepted, the recommendations can be spelt out which are the recommendations that have been accepted. There is nothing wrong in test.

MR. SPEAKER : What is your supplementary?

SHRI NADENDLA BHASKARA RAO : I know it concerns security.

SHRI MADHUKAR SIRPOTDAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this question is a very specific question, but the hon. Minister of Defence has said that because of the secrecy and national interest he was not disclosing certain