

Madam said, 'Don't bother about it'. I am very grateful to Panditji for his assurance that it would be taken up, for which not only I but the entire Tamil Nadu is very thankful to him because after Independence, no metre gauge has been converted into broad gauge in Tamil Nadu. That is the actual thing, so much so, it is for the first time you are taking up conversion of this line into broad gauge.

There is another grievance against the Railway Minister, Mr. Pandey. The other day, Mr. Jaffer Sharief telephoned to me—he is not here now—that there was a strike in the Madurai Division. He met me and said, 'Mr. Kosalram, you go and convince them. I am going to get this Madurai-Nagarcoil new line included in this Division'. So, categorically in the presence of the then General Manager of Southern Railway he wrote this in his own handwriting. I went there. I telephoned to Panditji informing him of the position. Panditji gave a trunk call from Delhi to Tenkasi. I was told that it would be favourably considered. Definite promise had been given by Shri Jaffer Sharief and Panditji for inclusion of new line between Nagercoil and Tirunelveli in Madurai Division. Then I went and convinced the striking employees to call off the strike. Immediately the strike was withdrawn.

Unfortunately, fifteen days back, I saw in the papers that Pandayji had written that this line will be included in Trivandrum Division and not in Madurai Division. Ministers may come and ministers may go. But if a definite assurance given is not implemented, what will people think? It has been published in the press. Now can I face the people? What will people think of Pandayji?

I would refer to Rapid Transit System at Madras. The office created for this project has been in existence for 10 years. Many surveys have been conducted for the past 10 years. For instance, the Coovum river flowing around the city of Madras can be conveniently used for having a circular railway, naturally after drying the river and desilting it. This office has been ordered to be closed now. I demand that this office should be allowed to function and this scheme should be taken up for execution.

The hon. Minister Shri Panday and Shri R. Venkataraman have told me that this office will continue. If it is closed down all of a sudden what would people think of you? Kindly consider this point.

For ages I have been demanding that Arumuganeri Railway station should have covered platforms, so that the salt produced here is stacked here safely and it should not get spoiled because of rains. Arumuganeri alone produces 10% of the total

salt production in the country. I hail from Arumuganeri. Chemical and salt industries are there. But there is no coverage at the railway station. Since my birth it is continuing in the old state. So, proper improvements should be brought in over there.

According to the Railway Ministry Report, in the country broadgauge forms only 51% of the total route kilometre and Metregauge 42% of the total while broadgauge accounts for 86.6 per cent of the freight tonne kilometres and about 77.5 per cent of the passenger kilometres, metregauge accounts for only 13.3 per cent of freight tonne kilometres and 21.8 per cent of passenger kilometres. Naturally, there will be a demand for conversion of MG into BG. I am sure that the hon. Minister will bear this in mind while replying to the debate.

13 hrs.

Salt is one of the major essential commodities. One or two years before, only the licensed salt factories were allotted 'C' category. After my efforts—I have been to jail and I am a Salt Satyagrahi—unlicensed salt factories also have been allotted 'C' category. In Tuticorin, for example, the licensed salt factories produce about 4 lakh tonne and the unlicensed salt factories are producing about 12 lakh tonnes. The industry Department had recommended to the Railways that the unlicensed salt factories should also be included in 'C' category. You have included it in 'C' category. But the number of wagons allotted is the same for 4 lakh tonnes and now for 16 lakh tonnes. For example, if it was 100 or 1000 wagons for 4 lakh tonnes, the same number of wagons are being allotted now for 16 lakh tonnes. I would request the hon. Minister to increase the number of wagons according to the quantity of salt produced. In my part of the country, salt is being sold at Rs. 5 for 100 kg. whereas in the north-eastern parts, in Assam and in other areas, salt is being sold at Rs. 5 per kg. It is because of the scarcity of wagons. So, kindly increase the number of wagons

13.01 hrs.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

MR. SPEAKER : I have to inform the House that I have received the following message dated the 26th February, 1981 from the President :

"I have received with great satisfaction the expression of thanks by the Members of the Lok Sabha for the Address which I delivered to both Houses of Parliament assembled together on 16th February, 1981."

13.02 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha adjourned for Lunch till
Fourteen of the Clock.*