

[Shri Janardhana Poojary]

Textiles strike. He has raised certain issues.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : You send it to the concerned Departments.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY : Yes, Sir. Regarding the T.V. Station, I think, the hon. Minister who is present might have taken note of. So far as other issues are concerned, they are administrative matters and his views will be conveyed to the concerned Ministries.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I shall now put the motion to the vote of the House.

The question is :

“That the Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain further sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the services of the financial year 1982-83, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Now, we take up clause by clause consideration :

The question is :

“That Clauses 2 and 3 and the Schedule stand part of the Bill”.

The motion was adopted.

Clauses 2 and 3 and the Schedule were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY : Sir, I beg to move :

“That the Bill be passed.”

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The question is :

“That the Bill be passed.”

The motion was adopted.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : Before we go to the Half-an-Hour Discussion, I suggest that because of the discussion on the Drought Condition tomorrow, we may slip over lunch-hour tomorrow. (*Interruptions*).

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Is it the sense of the House that we will not have lunch-break tomorrow ?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS : Yes, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : We will have lunch tomorrow but the lunch-interval will not be there.

18.24 HRS.

HALF AN HOUR DISCUSSION

LATE RUNNING OF TRAINS

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in reply to my Question (a) whether Government are aware that most of the trains including the most prestigious trains are running inordinately late; (b) if so, reasons therefor; and (c) remedial steps taken thereon, hon. Minister, Shri Mallikarjun, said in the first sentence :

“Yes, some prestigious trains do run late sometimes....”

Now, Sir, I shall call this reply to be the under-statement of the decade. Sir, the reply is as coy and shy as the newly married bride.

Mr. Mallikarjun is sitting in front me. To imagine him as a coy and shy bride is a little difficult. For that I have to cover my eyes. But nobody else would have made that kind of a statement. It would have been much nearer the truth had the Minister said, “Yes. Some prestigious trains do run on time once in a blue moon.” Will you not agree with me, Sir ? I ask any hon. Member sitting here, is this not the situation ? Can anyone say that is not true ? Is it not the situation that some prestigious trains, sometimes, once in a blue moon

run-on-time? (*Interruption*) You have no other alternative. But I know some people have conscience and they will agree with me.

Now, it is not just my word against his word. In reply to the preceding debate on the Supplementary Demands for Grants for the Railways, the hon. Railway Minister, Mr. Sethi, made a claim that from January to July, the punctuality performance has considerably improved—you mark the word “considerably”. He, of course, said that in the Eastern, the North-Eastern, the South-Eastern and the Central Railways, there is unpunctuality. But there also he claimed that from January to June, it has considerably improved. On June 22, I personally reached Howrah by Kalka Mail. It is supposed to reach Howrah at 8.45 A.M.—I will come to the re-schedule timings later—but it reached Howrah at 12 O’clock, not very late, only 3 hours and 15 minutes late. But as I alighted from the train at the station, I heard an announcement saying, “A. C. Express will be 11 hours late” and another announcement immediately following the earlier one said that such and such train from Bihar will arrive 23 hours late. This was in June. Doubtless, there has been considerable improvement from January to June.

In Delhi, when we were coming to Parliament—some six of us MPs were there—the A.C. Express, a prestigious train reached here at 2 P.M. instead of reaching here at 9.35 A.M. (Scheduled time). Doubtless, there has been considerable improvement. If this is called considerable improvement, I do not know what can be general deterioration.

I would like to mention another thing before going to other “considerable improvements”. The Sealdah line of Calcutta has really become a plague in everybody’s life. Thousands and thousands of commuters travel by that route. Everyday, there is such a chaotic condition about the running of trains that the plight of the people cannot be imagined. Commuters reach home at 1 O’clock in the morning and it is no surprise that every time there is some riot, something, somebody getting beaten up, etc. etc. That being our own region, I particularly wanted to mention it.

Then, the hon. Minister, Mr. Sethi, said that it is true on such and such railways the things are not so good. But he claimed that there has been great improvement on the Southern Railway and that here has been 90 per cent punctuality. You yourself, Sir, come from the southern side; here and some hon. Members coming from the south.

There is a train called KK Express, the prestigious train? You ask hon. Members Shri E. Balanandan or Shri P. K. Kodiyam or Shrimati Susheela Gopalan—I do not know if there is any other Hon. Member present on either side—at least you are there—ask the Hon. Minister to say how many times during the course of the last three months, the KK Express did come on time?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I believe better late, than accidents.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE: That is another thing.

The Hon. Minister said:

“200 trains, mails and expresses are being particularly looked into.”

I would request the Hon. Minister Shri P. C. Sethi to make a statement here whether any considerable improvement has taken place at any time by any of these 200 trains from the month of January to June this year? How many times trains came on time within the six months?

If there is any improvement in the situations, then that would be real news because trains running late is no more a news. But here, if the Hon. Minister really can say that on such and such date, this train came on time, that would be banner headline.

I would request everybody here to canvass that if such a thing comes about, that would be a banner headline.

What are the reasons? They are even more interesting. I quote:

“On account of alarm chain pulling, miscreants’ activities, disconnection of hose pipe, rolling-stock failure, defects and other operation failures.”

[Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee]

Among the remedial measures also :

“Liaison with the concerned State Governments is being maintained by various zonal railways for arresting the incidence of alarm chain pulling, hose pipe disconnection and other miscreants’ activities.”

Put together, one would come to the conclusion that it is all the miscreants of the world who have united against the railway administration for making the trains run late !

I do not deny that in some parts of the country there are some people who go on pulling chains etc. and that causes delay. But, after all, this is the statement made ! On the strength of it, it seems that it is miscreants’ affair.

I ask the Hon. Minister to definitely tell me how many times is it due to the miscreants’ activities that all over India this chaotic condition has been created in the railway train running and how many times is it due to really certain other series factors which need consideration ?

Before going to those other factors, I would like to deal with two other “remedial measures”.

In reply to my question what remedial steps were taken thereon, the statement says :

“Punctuality of the performance of important mail and express trains is watched in the Railway Board’s Office on day to day basis.”

“General Managers are paying personal attention about matters pertaining to punctual running of trains.”

One remedial measure to make is “day to day watching in the office.” Very high-sounding phrase “day to day watching from Railway Board Office” !

I would like to know how many officials of the Railway Board including its Chairman have travelled in trains during the last three months out of their schedule on touring. Let the Hon. Minister say.

I would also like to know how many times have the Hon. Ministers of Railway

travelled in trains of late and how many times have they performed their tours by aeroplanes ?

Day to day watching from house-tops, from ivory-towers, is very good but the results naturally are what they are. I have already described. I do not want to repeat them.

Another question is the General Managers are paying personal attention to matters pertaining to punctual running of trains. I cannot say about all General Managers; surely they are definitely paying personal attention ! But I quote one personal reference.

In June, one day, I was in Kharagpur. The General Manager of South-Eastern Railway happened to be there on that day having travelled by train to Kharagpur. He had to go back to Calcutta. On that day it was found that the East Coast Express was running late by six hours. The General Manager paid ‘personal attention’ to it and arranged for a special train for himself to go back to Calcutta. This is one of the performances that I know of. Very great personal attention indeed ! This cannot be denied. I do not know how many more are paying that kind of personal attention. But this is from my own very little personal experience that I have said.

All that I want to say is that, really, this kind of answers are irresponsible answers, to say the least, considering the seriousness of the situation with regard to late-running of trains which dislocates everything. You go to the station and stand there for hours and hours together to receive somebody who is coming, maybe a pregnant woman, but coming after giving birth to a child, maybe a heart patient but coming almost collapsed. There are so many other things also which are happening.

Actually the reasons that are mentioned are reasons which are true for all time to come. In Bengali we say and, perhaps, in Hindi also :

“Yuge yuge kale kale satya”

They are eternal truths. Whatever the hon. Minister may say in his reply, our own personal experience shows that, in the last three or four months, the situation has very much deteriorated. What is the

actual reason for this special deterioration, apart from the general deterioration? That was my question. But that has been totally ignored.

I would like to mention two things in this connection. Already there is an instruction from the Railway Board—if the Minister would controvert me, let him, but according to me this is the position—that half an hour's late will not be considered late any more; there is an official instruction to that effect. That apart, as you know, from last May, most of the trains which are long-distance trains, prestigious trains, have been given more running time. For example, the Kalka Mail has been given more than one hour extra running time, officially. So, already one and a half hours' late-running is absorbed. The K. K. Express has been given three hours extra running time. Three hours are absorbed by this extra running time, and then half-an-hour is also given, over and above that.

Now you can see how this brilliant calculation of 90 per cent punctuality is arrived at. All the trains are put together, long distance trains like the K. K. Express and the Kalka Mail and also short distance trains covering a few kilometres are lumped together and then this wonderful percentage is given which will confuse everybody. I have given our experience which cannot be denied.

So, Sir, you will please remember the instruction part. You will also remember that, when the new administration started, when the new Chairman of the Board came, since the question came up that the railway revenue has to increase and we all agreed that the railway revenue should increase; tickets, travel should be avoided, etc. etc. But in the name of augmenting the railway revenue, it was decided that the goods trains would be given precedence. So, the entire coordination between running of goods trains and running of passenger trains has been destroyed. Since then, the late-running has really been on the increase.

Now, whatever is written here, 'on day-to-day basis' and all that, I firmly deny and call it bogus. Our experience shows that, in this very time, the situation has deteriorated.

Another factor, which everybody mentioned here yesterday and today, is track-repair. Dandavateji the other day pointed out that out of 61,000 km., 10,000 km. are in deplorable conditions, splitting of rails, etc. is there and also some other Member said that in your area the trains are no more moving, they are to be pushed...

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (New Delhi) : They are walking.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : I say they are not walking, they are absolutely lying down practically. There are some really very serious shortcomings ...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Even-walking—you do not agree ?

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : That is a good fortune that some of them are walking. This is the situation. Sometimes they do not walk, let alone run. At least walking is an improvement.

Sir, in order not to waste the time, I would like to point out that there is another big area that in this list of so-called reasons, 'miscreants' etc. are there. But I would like to say that two or three very important ones have not been mentioned. I would like the Minister to make a thorough examination of it and not to give such perfunctory answers to such important questions which can cover them with glory but that is an imagined glory—totally an imagination. Let him come back to the reality and stand on his own legs. He has big legs. He can stand firmly. After all let him not behave like a newly married bride and let him answer our questions and find out what are the real reasons. Otherwise this kind of an answer is not going to satisfy anybody, not only me, but not only the Members of the House but the whole country is absolutely dissatisfied with the performance of our Railways. I, through you, would like to register that and I would like the Minister to come out openly with the answers that I have sought for.

PROF. RUP CHAND PAL (Hooghly) : This is an international phenomenon !

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : One amendment to your suggestion. Instead of being called a 'newly married bride', you can

[Mr. Deputy-Speaker]

call him a 'newly married bridegroom.' No bride will be like Mr. Mallikarjun.

Yes, the Minister.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): Unfortunately, I am not that shy bridegroom or a bride if somebody considers me in his imagination as a bride.

Coming back to the exact reality as has been expected by the hon. Members in this august House the Government would never make any attempt to deviate from the existing realities in terms of the service to the people of the country and particularly, in relation to the commonest man, the poor man, who has got various programmes and who has to reach his destination in time and with great difficulty to meet his own schedules. So, it has been the constant effort on the part of the Railway Administration to see that the people are transported from one remote corner to another remote corner of this big country. In carrying them in proper times, all out efforts are being applied by the railway administration. In our work there is nothing to hide. The punctuality of trains is one of the basic factors which has been very much concern with the people and the Government.

Everyday about 10 million people are carried by the Indian Railways from one part of the country to the other. The carrying part we take as a secondary phenomenon. The means of carrying is more important and it consists of about more than 1636 passenger trains, 2376 EMUs and 517 mail and express trains which are being run daily to cater to this 10 million passengers and in which, of course, the suburban passengers in Bombay itself account for 4.5 million commuters. However, it becomes an important and basic duty of the Railways to see how best in time the passengers can reach their destinations and without any sort of inconvenience to the travelling passengers. For various reasons which are known to this august House—it has been earlier informed also.

Punctuality had been affected in the past few years also. If you take the past ten years or so, the punctuality was no doubt quite satisfactory to the tune of 100 per cent. But, during the period of two years of emergency and a year preceding it or even earlier to that, the punctuality was affected. Now, also it has been affected. If you take the years from 1980-81 to 1981-82, what has been mentioned by the Minister of Railways in this august House is that considerable improvement from January to June had been made in the punctuality of trains. It might not have been to the contentment of the hon. Member. But, there has been a considerable improvement as compared to the previous year. The punctuality of trains—the performance of the trains—was much more satisfactory, comparatively, from January to July, 1981. I do not dispute the punctuality of the trains that is being experienced by the Members on that side as well as this side. Instead of entering into a controversy I want to tell you what exactly the Government is going to do. Our effort is to see that the punctuality or better performance by trains is maintained properly. For that, a cell has been created with a Joint Director to look after the punctuality of trains in the Railway Board. Apart from that, we have created an emergency cell through which the running of trains is monitored. There are various factors which come in the way of punctual running of trains. As has been mentioned by the hon. Member, alarm chain pulling, hose pipe disconnections and various other factors are also responsible for the late running of trains. I do agree to this extent that one of the factors responsible for this is due to bad coal sometimes and our telecommunication system sometimes is a little bit affected by the miscreants—One has to take cognisance of this factor. As the Member rightly said, track condition and rolling stocks are also the other factors responsible. The factors which are, of course, not within our control are alarm chain pulling and hosepipe disconnection and so on and so forth. If the railways do not take up the renewal of track work that is also one of the factors for not running the trains punctually. Sometimes, there will be speed restrictions imposed on trains also. At the moment, on about more

than 2,000 K.M. track, the speed restriction is there. This covers the trunk routes through in which all mail and express trains and other prestigious trains pass when they come from one end to the other once they come under those restrictions in spite of proper visualisation made by the Administration before the tabulation of the time-table itself is made. Later too, particularly when an emergency arises with regard to the bridge or track being not in order, there will be a lot of late running of trains. Sometimes, because of the failure of the locomotives—they may not move out of the shed within the scheduled time—there will be a delay of two to three hours. Then from the originating point itself, the train may start late or, in-between, for various reasons, the trains may not run punctually. You know we are also very much concerned with the coaches and because of the lack of funds allotted by the Planning Commission we are not able to produce the requisite number of coaches also for the replacement. India being a vast country combined with various factors of this nature definitely there is some shortfall in the maintenance of punctuality. However, Government is making all endeavour on its part to ensure that the punctuality is maintained.

As regards 200 prestigious trains there are a number of trains which had about 90% of punctuality. In the eastern zone and the NF Railway, of course, punctuality is much more affected but still we are making all possible efforts to see that they maintain punctuality. In the 1 Up Kalka Mail we do maintain 90% punctuality. (Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER : Who will believe ?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : I will come to the DN train. DN train does not maintain punctuality. 2 DN Kalka Mail maintains only 43.3% punctuality because of various factors like electric failures, track renewal and bridge work, etc. There are various combined factors which are really coming in the way and Government is making absolute endeavour on its part as a moral obligation to see that the passengers—particularly the poor passengers who travel mostly in trains—do not suffer. We have constituted some teams which will

go and report back on the safety measures as well as on the technical side so that if any lacunae persists it can be attended to.

Sir, what the hon. Minister has told needless to be taken lightly but politely speaking in this august House I would say that it is the sincere effort on the part of the Railway Administration to see that the punctuality performance of the trains is improved to the maximum extent at the earliest possible time.

*SHRI SATYA GOPAL MISRA (Tamluk) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very outset I will thank Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee for raising discussion on such an important matter, in the Lok Sabha. Sir, from the points raised in this discussion and from the statement of the hon. Minister, it appears that the Government is not able to correctly evaluate the seriousness of the situation. A little while ago the 'Kalka Mail' was mentioned. I do not know on which day the Kalka Mail runs on time either on the UP or on the DOWN. The Minister has stated that 90% of the trains run on time. But do our travelling public believe that? Sir, this serious matter is being taken rather casually and the root of the problem is being bypassed in a rather well-planned manner. Sometimes we have seen that there is a lack of cohesion in what the different Ministers state in this House. One Minister's statement does not tally with that of another Minister. I will cite a few examples : In the 'Hindustan Times' dated 25th March, 1981, the then Railway Minister Shri Kedar Pandey was quoted as saying that within one month he will establish punctuality in the running of trains. Then, Sir, on 23rd April, 1981, Shri Mallik Arjun said just the opposite thing. He said that in our country perhaps it would not be possible to run trains on time. Today again the hon. Minister is saying that considerable improvement has been achieved in the running of trains. This way, Sir, conflicting and contradictory statements are being made repeatedly.

Ours is a vast country, and lakhs of people depend on the Railways for travelling to earn their livelihood or to carry

*The original speech was delivered in Bengali.

[Shri Satya Gopal Misra]

on their business or to transport their goods etc. Over the last two years and a half, the Railways have increased the fares and freight on several occasions. But their main achievement has been that only the proportion of late running of trains has considerably gone up. The late running of trains gradually came to be recognised and the running time was extended by two hours or three hours but in spite of that the trains are running late. The main causes for late running of trains are being cited as disconnection of hose-pipes chain-pulling agitations etc. That means the public are being held mainly responsible for the late running of trains. I concede that some cases of chain-pulling etc. are there. But to say that they are the sole reasons for this ill, is not based on facts. Sir, the maintenance and repair of tracks and equipment is the responsibility of the Government. Who else is responsible for the faults in the railway tracks, signalling equipment etc., other than the Railway Ministry? In our country there is a dual authority in charge of the Railways. One is the Railway Board and the other is the Railway Ministry. We do not know who is responsible for what. They run like two parallel lines that never meet. Other countries have some law for their Railway system. We too have our own set of rules and law. For example there is penal provisions for chain pulling or ticketless travelling. This is of course correct. Such miscreants should be punished. But what about the administration? They are wasting valuable time of crores of travelling public through late running of trains. Now who will compensate the people for this loss? I know such a system of compensation exists in Sweden. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he will introduce some system of compensation for the peculiar types of damages or loss suffered by passengers due to late running of trains. The Minister had spoken high sounding words like 'Monitoring cells' etc. We are not interested in monitoring cells and all that. We simply want to know when he will be able to restore punctual running of railway trains for the convenience of the people? Sir, thrusting the entire blame for late running of trains on the public will not do. We want to know what steps

he will take to punish the railway officers who contribute to or cause late running of trains. He may amend the Railway Act, and provide for punishment to the erring officers. When is he going to do that? It is a fact that the day to day experience of the travelling public do not tally with the statement of the Minister. Practically every train today runs late.

In the end Sir, I want to state a few specific things—I would ask the hon. Minister whether trains have run regularly on the Lalgola-Sealdah Section of the Eastern Railway for a single day at any time? Sir, about eight lakh people travel to and from the Sealdah station every day. I do not know of any other station which attracts so many passengers every day. I would like to know what steps he is going to take to ease the situation at 'Sealdah'. In Bombay they have separate tracks for suburban trains. But at Sealdah where eight lakh people use the railways every day there are no separate tracks for local/suburban trains. Is he going to attend to this problem? We are not interested in high sound words. We want to know whether he will take the suggested steps so that the inconvenience and harassment of the travelling public is removed and the trains run on time.

19 hrs.

SHRI HARIKESH BAHADUR (Gorakhpur) : Sir, Late running of trains in this country has become a perpetual phenomenon. (*Interruption*) It may be part of a global phenomenon also. Some people here feel that if there is any kind of corruption anywhere, that has to be considered as part of a global phenomenon. But what I feel is that it is there only because of the most callous and indifferent attitude of the Railway Administration.

In spite of the fact that the hon. Minister knows that trains are not running on time, he is just trying to defend the whole thing. I should say that in no part of the country are trains running in time. I would like especially to talk of the North Eastern Railway. I, in fact come from Gorakhpur.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Tell about your personal experience.

SHRI HARIKESH BAHADUR : Yes; that is why I am talking only about the correct things, and not about wrong things. You should just try to find out how many trains in the North Eastern Railway are running in time.

The Minister is telling that about 90% of the trains are running in time. He is saying that they are having a monitoring cell, and that the punctuality performance is being watched by the Railway Board. If he tries to find out how many trains are running on time, he will find that 90% of the trains in the North Eastern Railway are not running on time. The Railway Administration in that particular Zonal Railway is completely paralyzed. It does not appear that there is any Railway administration there. One gentleman is the General Manager there. If you ring him up at the office, nobody in his office will receive the telephone call. When we made complaints in the Railways' Consultative Committee the Chairman of the Railway Board was defending that administration. He was also praising that person who was responsible for the whole thing. But I can tell you that the people who are residing in that area are the worst victims. Every day, the fare is being increased; but the common people are not getting any benefit or facility, and there is no improvement in the facilities provided to the people by the Railways. Government must take all these things seriously and try to improve the situation.

I would like to give an example. There is a Rapti-Gomti Express running between Lucknow and Gorakhpur. This train is always running late. In fact, its running time should not be more than five hours. But that train, according to the schedule mentioned in the Time Table, should reach within nine hours. According to that schedule, the train should reach from Gorakhpur to Lucknow within 9 hours or so, but this train always takes about 10-11 hours like that; and the people are very much harassed. This time should be reduced; first according to the Railway time table schedule, that time must be reduced and at the same time, it should be seen that whatever has been mentioned in the time table, the train should run accordingly, but it has never run like that. I have already made a complaint about it. Therefore, I

request the hon. Minister to look into the running of those trains and at the same time I would like to ask one question about it. I want to know whether he is going to take any action to improve the running of the trains in the North-Eastern Railway so that trains must run in time and the passengers who are travelling by those trains may not be harassed. This is a very specific question and I would like to get a categorical reply from him.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You can reply to Mr. Misra and Mr. Harikesh Bahadur. Mr. Arjun Sethi is not present here.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : What the hon. member Shri Mishra has mentioned merely giving a plea that trains are running late because of the chain pulling or hose-pipes disconnection is not a satisfactory factor. It is true. I have already informed that, apart from this, there are other factors like loco failure also; sometimes bad coal is also being supplied; sometimes the signalling telecommunication system also get obstructed because of miscreants, because they will take away some important metal from this signalling for want of no reason and then it becomes an hindrance. As he has suggested that there should be improvement in the signalling and telecommunication system, the Government is aware of this factor because sometimes even the urchins also without knowing anything, some vested interests sometimes will simply send some boys on the track and they will take away some copper material; they do not know anything about that and that will be sold to some vested interest for just Rs. 2; and that man makes money out of it. So, such factors of anti-social elements involvement is also there. It does not mean that this is merely the cause; so many variety of causes are there for the improper running of the train. Being cautious the Government is making all intensive efforts even to see that the punctuality on the lines Lalgola and Scaldah and some other parts of the Eastern Railway be maintained; and positive measures can be adopted on the part of the Government; that I have already informed.

So far as the compensation for the delay or the late running of the trains is concerned, because of the passengers losing their own interest, there is no proposal with the

[Shri Mallikarjun]

Government of India to compensate to the passengers as the passengers in Sweden or elsewhere are being compensated.

Shri Harikesh Bahadur has expressed his views about the North-Eastern Railway. I fully agree with him that there is no 90 per cent of punctuality; it is below that. But there are other factors also. For example, he is keen and desirous to seek an assurance that in the NER the trains should run punctually. For example, he has given the name of a train from Gorakhpur to Lucknow which takes about 9 hours. I do agree with it. What has happened in the recent past because of the conversion of the Smastipur—Barabanki; and after the conversion work has also been completed in that there will not be the possibility to maintain any train at the optimum speed; there will be a gradual increase in the speed because it is a converted track? So, far that reason, from Gorakhpur to Lucknow, the experience of the hon. member, whatever he has got, may be true. And apart from that, in the N.E. Railway itself for example, from Brauni to Katihar, that section is also bad. That section has been approved for conversion but for lack of funds we are not able to undertake all these things. And

because of the track condition, as you have rightly mentioned, safety is given priority. Even if someone reaches the destination late it does not matter; safety is the prime thing. In this context due emphasis has been laid on it and the Government is fully conscious of the various lacunae persisting; and for this reason itself, first priority is given to punctuality of trains. Ever since Shri Sethi ji has come, he has been openly declaring, and he has been taking positive measures also, to see that punctuality is properly maintained. For the attainment of punctuality of trains Government is making all efforts. If there is a mechanical defect it is removed immediately and a SIG-committee has been constituted for this purpose. Other reasons like defects in the track which I have already mentioned in the House are also being looked into to attain punctuality and to meet the aspirations of this country. The Railway administration will not spare any efforts to maintain punctuality of train.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The House started adjourned till 11 a.m. tomorrow.

1912 P. S.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, August 3, 1982/Sravana 12, 1904 (Saka).