

thing about what has just now transpired about the provision of time for the general budget. You know that the Business Advisory Committee has allotted 15 hours for the discussion on the general budget, and it has also agreed that it should be concluded on the 14th. In order not to inconvenience Members and staff, so that they need not sit very late on the 14th, it has been suggested that today, tomorrow and the day after we sit till 7. I have consulted the leaders of the opposition and they are agreeable. So, I submit this for your consideration. So many Members of our Party want to speak and we want to give as much opportunity as possible. I request that this may be considered.

MR. SPEAKER: I am very happy that you have added three more days. You have also written and sent it to me.

SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH: I have submitted it now for the consideration of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: This is okay. I now call upon Mr. L. N. Mishra to continue his reply.

12.45 hrs.

RAILWAY BUDGET, 1973-74—
GENERAL DISCUSSION—contd.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI L. N. MISHRA): At the outset I should like to express my deep sense of gratitude to the hon. Members of the House who have participated in the debate on the Railway Budget. A large number of Members have made many good points and it may not be possible for me to give a reply at this stage to all the points mentioned by the hon. Members. However I shall try to send replies to the points that I may not be able to touch here, in due course. I shall take some of the important points today.

I shall start with the question of fares and freights.

Some Hon'ble Members have said that since I presented the Railway Budget within a fortnight of my taking over the Ministry of Railways, I was not responsible for this budget. This is farthest from the truth. I affirm that the budget is my own and I take full responsibility for all the proposals made; whatever proposal has been made has been done by me after fullest consideration and I own all of them.

As I pointed out earlier in my Budget speech, the staff costs, which form 60 per cent of our working expenses, have been steeply rising over the years. During the last three years, the staff costs have gone up due to sanction of three interim reliefs as a result of the recommendations of the Pay Commission, increases in daily running allowances and implementations of the various Tribunal awards including that of Miabhoy Tribunal. The staff costs which were Rs. 495.5 crores in 1971-72 will be Rs. 532.6 crores this year and Rs. 567.46 crores next year. In short, the staff costs are going up by 7 to 8 per cent a year, even though the increase in the number of staff employed is going up only by 1 per cent. I may again emphasise that these figures do not take into account the likely effect of the final recommendations of the Pay Commission which we are yet to receive. The prices of coal, diesel oil, iron and steel and other materials have also been going up steeply. Hon'ble Members will remember that in spite of the increasing costs, there was no increase in third class fares for 1972-73. It is because of the increase in the costs of inputs that the existing third class fares, have had to be increased by 3 per cent. There should not be even a shadow of doubt about the minimum effect of the proposed increase in fares for third class. I am, therefore, quoting certain specific instances—From Delhi to Amritsar, a third class ordinary passenger will have to pay only 25 paise more, i.e., Rs. 12.05 in-

[Shri L N Mishra]
 instead of Rs 11 80 as at present. If he travels by third class mail or express train he will have to pay only 35 paise more. For longer distances, say from New Delhi to Trivandrum the third class ordinary fare is actually Rs 1301 30 less than the present fare. The proposed fare is Rs 57 65 in place of Rs 58 95. Even if the passenger to Trivandrum travels by mail or express throughout he will have to pay only 15 paise more.

I would also like to draw the attention of hon members to the fact that there is no increase in the existing fares for first 15 KM for third class passengers. One or two members of this House were making light of this exemption and asked how many third class passengers will be travelling for a distance of 15 KM only. Let me tell them that there are 500 million such passengers who are travelling only a distance of 15 KM or less i.e. one-third of the total third class travelling public including season ticket holders. Even in the case of other passengers there will be only a marginal increase over the existing fares including tax not more than 25 paise for third class ordinary and 95 paise for third class mail or express trains.

I find there is some criticism about our decision to levy a supplementary charge for travel on certain selected super fast express trains. We have selected only 8 trains out of 220 mail and express trains running all over the country. Hon members will agree with me that it is not fair to charge the same fares for GT Express which takes 39 hours 45 minutes and for another express which takes 53 hours for the same journey. The difference in the running time between these two trains is more than 13 hours. Again, it will not be fair to charge same fares from Delhi to Bombay for the Frontier Mail and the Dehra Dun Express because the difference in the running time between these two trains is nearly 9 hours.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Gwalior). Then why not reduce the fare for Dehra Dun Express?

SHRI L N MISHRA. I know you will say that. But I need money. There has been very heavy overcrowding in these super fast trains and the proposed levy of a supplementary charge is more in the nature of dissuading the public, particularly short distance travellers from travelling to overcrowding. By travelling in it to overcrowding. By travelling in these super fast express trains, the passenger saves not only valuable time but also expenses on meals, refreshments, additional sleeper charges etc. Compared to it a small supplementary charge of Rs 1 50 is negligible. I may repeat once again that all available seats in these super fast trains will be fully reserved. There will therefore be no overcrowding and I am sure the long distance passengers will appreciate this.

I would also like to remind hon members that we are at present suffering a loss of nearly 63 crores on our passenger and coaching traffic proposed increases by which the passengers will have to pay only Rs 12 45 crores extra over what they are paying now, do not bridge even a fraction of the wide gulf of Rs 63 crores.

I have truly kept the interest of the common man in my mind and that is why I had not proposed any increase in rates for carriages of essentials like milk, fruits, vegetables, fish, books, newspapers etc by parcels. In fact there is absolutely no increase in the luggage and parcels rates for any kind of traffic.

I must, of course, admit that I have touched the upper class passengers a little more, the percentage increase in their case being, on an average, 7 per cent over the existing fares including tax. This, of course, is truly in keeping with our objective of taxing

the affluent sections of our society a little more to contribute to the general revenues of the country.

Some hon. Members have criticised my proposal by saying that when the air-conditioned class fare is equal to air fare then nobody would patronise the air-conditioned class I do not think so because travel in an air-conditioned class gives a person plenty of rest. People who prefer to travel by train in an air-conditioned class do not do so for saving money. Besides, while only a few places are connected by air, the air-conditioned train service is available even to places which are not connected by air.

Coming to goods traffic, our earnings next year is estimated to be Rs. 785 crores, but only 185 crores or 24 per cent is the result of the increase in freight rates. Here again I have touched only low-rated commodities which are being transported by the railways at considerable loss. Even so, I have taken special care to exempt essential necessities of life like foodgrains, salt and kerosene oil from this increase. Further, all the commodities which are charged at class 60 and above have not been affected at all. Hon. Members, will appreciate that in the onerous task of increasing the revenues of the railways without at the same time, increasing the burden on the common man, I have attempted a delicate balancing act. But my task have been much easier and pleasant if there were no agitations, on strikes and no bandhs. Even so, I have not attempted to bridge the full gap between earnings and expenditure. There is still a gap of Rs. 8.65 crores which I have deliberately left uncovered. I propose to bridge this gap by plugging ticketless travel which has been referred to by several members. It may not be possible to eliminate ticketless travel altogether in the next year or two, but I do hope to make a significant dent on this evil practice. Even, as it is, ticketless travel in certain parts of the country is much less than in others. If by intensive persuasion

and strong deterrent punishment I could bring down the extent of ticketless travel in certain areas to the levels in other areas where the incidence of this evil is much less, it would result in a sizeable increase in the passenger earnings. Similarly, by checking thefts and pilferages and reducing the amount of compensation paid and by the general toning up of efficiency in operation, I shall be able to make some savings in the working expenses.

The Memorandum circulated with the budget documents explains in detail the proposals for increases in freight rates of commodities. That Memorandum also gives full details of the increase in freight rates. The Memorandum also shows that the increase in the freight rate is a very small percentage of the price of the commodity.

There are, on the other hand, a large number of commodities the freight rates of which have not been increased at all. Among them are such essential articles of common use like sugar, tea, coffee, fruits and vegetables by parcel trains, fish, all varieties of textiles including handloom products, matches, bidi leaves, bidis, cigarettes, tobacco, books, newspapers, bicycles, petroleum oil and lubricants, soap, groceries, drugs and medicines, dyes and chemicals, utensils, iron and steel items, hides and skins, leather, raw cotton, raw jute, jute manufactures, machinery, non-ferrous metals like aluminium, copper, zinc, brass and a host of other commodities apart from coal which has already been put on a special footing with an increase of only three per cent on it.

Now I come to the question of new lines, conversions, doublings and restoration etc. This question has been raised by a number of hon. Members. Hon. Members will recall that while introducing the Railway Budget I had referred to the need for re-adapting of the classical concept of economic viability for initiating new railway projects or opening new lines upto 60 kilometres. In our existing frame

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work of viability, no new lines can be opened unless the volume of traffic exceeds three million tonnes

This is inherited from the British who wanted Indian railways to serve as a mere mode of transport for movement of troop and policemen within the country and for facilitating carrying of raw materials to port towns

This philosophy is a hang-over of the colonial system where transportation infrastructure is expected to facilitate the movement of primary goods, raw materials supply to the Mother economy. Over the 25 years of our freedom the concept of economy and social development has undergone far-reaching changes. The Government is interested not only in sustaining the development of regions already advanced but of effecting a wider dispersal of growth by greater reliance on the growth through Social Engineering.

The process of development must subserve the interests of different groups consumers and producers, traders and users, exports and national security. Over the years in all this process the interest of peasants, notably the cotton growers of Maharashtra, a Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, the rubber growers of Kerala, the rice growers of Bengal, Bihar and Assam, the tobacco growers of Andhra to mention a few have been comparatively ignored. It is therefore my intention to depart from the out-dated fixed norms of economic viability so that the development of backward regions, or the interests of growers are subserved in a larger measure. If the initial losses have to be borne for subserving these ends these investments would be still worthwhile in terms of their long run spread effect on the development of backward areas and of serving the interests of large number of farmers and growers dispersed throughout this country.

Now I will say a word about conversion of MG to BG also. Members are aware of the evils of the dual gauge system and have rightly

stressed for an accelerated pace of conversion. We have already taken up conversion of some important lines, where the traffic densities are high and urgent relief is needed. I refer particularly to the conversion from Viramgam to Okha in Gujarat and Barabanki to Samastipur in U.P. and Bihar.

Contrary to what some Members have said the work on these projects is proceeding apace and the Budget estimates provide Rs. 642 crores for Viramgam to Okha and Rs. 417 crores for Barabanki to Samastipur. Both the conversion projects are expected to be completed by 1977 as scheduled.

To have the full benefits of the Barabanki-Samastipur conversion it has to be extended to the east from Samastipur to Katihar and also from Bongaigaon to Guahat in Assam and towards north from Samastipur to Raxaul the frontier of Nepal. These projects are under active consideration and for sanction of the requisite funds I shall come to the House again.

The Delhi-Ahmedabad metric route is reaching the saturation point and therefore needs conversion. The survey for this is in progress. This large project of conversion will *inter alia* also accelerate the pace of development in Rajasthan. Another important project for conversion is the extension of the conversion from Miraj to Londa and Hospet to Goa for facilitating the increased export of iron ore through Goa Port and also for developing adequate capacity in connection with the setting up of the Vijayanagar Steel Complex in the area. The earlier surveys carried out are at present being up-dated to get the present picture of cost and return. Investigations have also been completed for the new line-conversion project Karur-Dindigul-Madurai-Tuticorin-Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, which has been proposed to serve the growing needs of the Tuticorin Port and fertiliser complex being set up there as also for the fast developing central

industrial belt of the southern peninsula. A decision on this has also to be taken early.

These are some of the important projects on which I will bestow serious attention and try to implement as much as I could.

Members from Mysore, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andhra have pleaded for taking up of new lines for drought relief. In Gujarat we have already in progress very important works like Virar-Ahmedabad Electrification, Viramgam-Okha conversion, Viramgam Shahibag doubling, Sabarmati-Gandhinagar new lines, etc. Earth work on these projects is being stepped up to afford maximum relief to the drought affected people of this region.

If found justified after investigations, it may be possible to take up early some earthwork as drought relief on some stretches of the conversion projects from Delhi to Ahmedabad and from Miraj to Londa and Hospet to Goa, to give relief to the drought-stricken people of Rajasthan and Mysore. There are already many projects of doubling, apart from Guntakal-Bangalore conversion in Andhra which could be progressed to give better drought relief in the area. This would, of course, be done when normal conditions are restored.

During the discussions I have referred to the restoration of the lines dismantled due to ravages of rivers and other causes. After all, but for the abandoning of these rail links due to some clause or other, they would have continued to function as an integral part of the railway system serving the growing needs of the region and it is only but natural for the public to demand their restoration.

I have, therefore, decided that these restorations, wherever the riverine conditions have since stabilised, must

be taken up in right earnest. This will open new areas and bring about economic recovery in the backward belt.

In my speech I mentioned that a number of important works of new lines and conversions were presently under examination and active consideration....

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN (Kangra): What about Kangra Valley?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: I have spoken to you that we shall discuss with the Irrigation Minister some time tomorrow. I would request you to be there.

Since I did not want to lose time in taking up these works and projects as soon as they were approved by the Government, I have sought the permission of the House to finance them by re-appropriation of funds granted by the Parliament for 1973-74, and to come up to Parliament with a Supplementary Demand, if any, in due course.

I would like to clarify that this procedure is intended to be followed in respect of preliminary expenditure which might have to be incurred on detailed surveys and investigations of these works as well as on their execution in the next financial year....

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY: (Cooch-Behar): Are you saying this only in principle or do you mean really restoration of the flood-affected railway lines....

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: You give a note. I will have it examined.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY: Specially in North Bengal of the N.F. Railway, Jalpaiguri-Haldibari. (Interruptions)

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: For North Bengal, Jalpaiguri side, I will have it examined.

[Shri L. N. Mishra]

Points were raised about non-availability of wagons for daily necessities of life. I would say a word about that also....

SHRI SHANKERRAO SAVANT (Kolaba): What about Maharashtra?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: I have made a statement in the House and said that these lines will be taken up....

AN HON. MEMBER: Manmad?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: I cannot say at this stage anything about any particular railway.

I would like to finish my speech, Mr. Speaker, and if some points are to be raised, they may be asked later. (Interruptions). About Maharashtra I have made a special statement in both the Houses. Those projects are there. About Gujarat, Rajasthan and Mysore, I have spoken. If any other project is to be taken, I cannot say now 'yes' or 'no'. I should have them examined and then only I will be able to say anything about those.

I would like to finish my speech. (Interruptions). I am not yielding.

SHRI P. M. MEHTA (Bhavnagar): Gujarat Government has assured to meet the deficit about Bhavnagar Tarapore Broad Gauge Railway Line. What is the reaction of the Government to that?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: I am not aware what assurance has been given by the Gujarat Government. I will try to find out and then inform.

SHRI BASHESHWAR NATH BHARGAVA (Ajmer): What about Ajmer-Kota line? It was started in 1899.

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: It was about a century back. I have to find out.. (Interruptions)

Despite heavy odds and serious dislocation of train movement in various parts of the country on account of strikes, bundhs, power shedding, severe drought conditions, and a number of political agitations, etc., the

latest being the troubles in Andhra Pradesh for over three months, the Railways have done a tremendous job in the last few months in the movement of goods traffic.

They had to carry more of food-grains over longer distances to meet the acute food shortage in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal, Bihar, Mysore and Kerala. Fertilisers had to be rushed on a crash programme basis to different areas before the sowing season so as to maximise food production during the Rabi season, and I am glad to say that demands for wagons for movement of fertilisers have been fully met. Even cattle fodder has had to be moved in much larger quantities. We had also to cater for movement of water by rail for drought affected areas.

On account of the power crisis caused primarily by drop in hydro-generation and other troubles in different power houses, enormously increased quantities of coal had to be rushed to thermal power stations to maintain and improve generation.

Notwithstanding all these special moves and the consequent heavy burden, the Railways have moved more of coal for steel plants as well as for other public users, more of finished steel, more of foodgrains, fertilisers and petroleum products to the extent of five million tonnes in the first ten months so far over the corresponding period of last year.

Except for the first quarter of this year, supply of wagons for the movement of cement has been practically full on demand. If there is shortage of cement in some parts of the country to-day, it is not due to want of wagons.

I have instructed that in order to meet the needs of seasonal traffic in different parts of the country, an increasing number of special trains carrying seasonal commodities like foodgrains, jute, cotton, sugar, tea, potatoes, etc., should be run on a top-priority basis.

Running of these specials will be arranged keeping in view the interests of the growers, consumers and distribution agencies. Supply of wagons for these 'Commodity Specials' will be done on a preferential basis.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): One question about the wagons.

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: I will come to the hon. Member.

Another idea that I have asked the Railway Board to revive is the creation of coal dumps in different parts of the country to the needs of smaller consumers. I have sought the co-operation of my colleague the Minister of Mines and Steel who has already initiated action in this regard, so that movement of coal could be augmented by arranging bulk movement to different areas from where movement over shorter distances will be arranged by road.

Yet another scheme which is now being developed by the Railway Board is in regard to running of a super fast parcel train between Delhi and Howrah. This train would be run like any other Express train on this route and would carry a parcel traffic, a part of which is now moving by different Mail/Express trains. One direct benefit of this scheme would be that the parcel vans now being carried by Mail/Express trains would be transferred to this new train and instead additional third class passenger coaches will be attached to these Mail/Express trains. This scheme will, therefore, have the twin benefit of speeding up the movement of parcel traffic and of providing more accommodation for third class passengers on Mail and Express trains. If this experiment is found successful, similar arrangements would be made on other trunk routes like Delhi-Bombay, Delhi-Madras Bombay-Howrah, etc.

I would also like to convey to the hon. Members that the railways have taken a number of steps to improve

the transit time of wagons in order to give better service to the customers. Longer trains with 44 bogies—110 wagons hauled by double electric or diesel engines have been introduced to carry coal to distant places. Super Express goods trains have been introduced between important trading centres on nominated days. Export Specials from Amritsar to Bombay as you know better, were introduced last year and these have become exceedingly popular with the exporters. More and more goods trains on important trunk routes are being dieselised to accelerate movement of export goods.

I am aware that there is still some quantum of unfulfilled demand particularly of coal for brick burning. I can assure the House that no effort will be spared to meet this demand also. However, I take this opportunity to request all sections in the House to realise the extremely difficult conditions under which our staff have been working in the field and I would request the House to record their appreciation for the sense of dedication displayed by the Railwaymen.

Some Members raised the question of punctuality of mail and express trains. I am glad to inform the House that the improved standards of punctuality particularly of mail and express trains achieved after a special drive from the latter part of 1971 has been maintained at a fairly high level since then. There has been a considerable improvement in the punctuality of mail/express trains on the North east frontier, Eastern and South Eastern Railways during the last six months as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. Apart from drives initiated by these Railways the improvement of punctuality on these Railways has also been partly due to general improvement in the law and order position in the areas served by them. On other Railways the punctuality has been ranging between 80 to 90 per cent.

श्री राम चन्द्र विकल (बागपत) : कुछ प्रश्न लोगों को करने हैं उसके लिए भी समय रखिएगा। ऐसा न हो मंत्री जी भाषण देकर चले जायें।

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: हां, हम तैयार हैं सवाल के लिए।

In recent months the punctuality has been affected adversely by the strike of loco running staff on southern Railway in September 1972, widespread agitations in Andhra Pradesh since October 1972, strike of the staff of Electricity Board of Uttar Pradesh during January this year, frequent power cuts and increased alarm chain pulling.

The enormity of the problem that has recently been felt of alarm chain pulling can be gauged from the fact that during November and December 1972 the total number of alarm chain pulling cases which affected punctuality was above 18000 as compared to about 13,000 during the corresponding months of 1971. Despite some of these factors beyond the control of Railways and temporary setbacks the Railways as a whole have been able to sustain a satisfactory performance in the punctuality of mail/express trains.

13.38 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

A general sense of alertness at all levels is having a salutary effect on the running of other passenger trains. The punctuality of selected important mail and express trains is being watched daily at the Railway Board's level and I must assure the Hon'ble Members of the House that it would be my endeavour to see that punctuality problem is treated on a priority basis.

A word about third class travel. Action has been taken to put into service additional coaches for third

class passengers. It is hoped that by the end of the Fourth Plan another 1177 BG and 247 MG coaches would be made available to meet the additional traffic requirements.

Action has also been taken to put into service new types of coaches in order to increase the capacity. We have plans in hand to extend the use of First Class Chair cars for accommodating 48 to 60 passengers meant for medium and short distance passengers respectively. At present the I Class coach of convention type has 22 to 24 berths. Similarly 48 berths two-tier airconditioned sleeper coacher will replace the First Class coaches for long distance passengers. By the introduction of the chair cars and air-conditioned 48 berth coaches on selected routes it would be possible to release accommodation on the train for attaching more third class coaches.

Another step taken is to introduce as an experimental measure BG double-decker third class coaches to seat 136 passengers for inter-city travel over medium distances. As has been announced earlier the second class accommodation is being progressively abolished and converted to third class accommodation. The steps indicated will, therefore, increase the capacity for third class passengers.

The need for proper maintenance and cleanliness of coaches including attention to lights, fans and other amenity fittings will receive my special attention.

Frequent inspections will be carried out by Railway officers to ensure proper maintenance of coaches in workshops, primary and secondary depots and at starting and intermediate stations. Special drives will be conducted every year for a period of two months from April 15 to June 15 for focussing attention on proper maintenance of coaches.

In order to feel the pulse of the travelling public, at originating stations

the opinions of passengers will be obtained in regard to maintenance and cleanliness.

Some Members have criticised catering services on the Railways. No doubt, quite a lot can be done to improve these services. The Hon'ble Members would be aware of the determined efforts made by the Railways to improve these services and the recent experiments made in introducing picking up of pre-cooked meals on certain trains. These have been widely appreciated and they will be extended to other trains. I am also introducing low priced packed meals and I am sure they will become popular.

As I have stated in my Budget speech, it is my intention to give special treatment to students and youths in Railway journeys in addition to what is already available to them. I intend to issue liberal concessional tickets for long journeys and make arrangements for running of special trains for them alone. They would be taken round the places of historical importance and also the industrial centres. These young men will see the new India emerging.

The high incidents of murder, dacoity and robbery in passenger trains as well as a large number of cases of theft of passengers' property has been causing me considerable concern. I frequently get letters from the public from passengers' associations and other public bodies who express their anxiety at the growing insecurity of rail travel.

Law and order being a subject in the State List of the constitution, protection of life and property of the passengers travelling by the Railways is the responsibility of the State Police in general and the Government Railway Police in particular. The provision of escorts on running trains comes within the purview of the Crime Duties of the Government Railway Police. The Railways are paying a sum of nearly Rs. 3 crores annually to the State Police as their contribution towards the maintenance of the

Government Railway Police and when such a large amount is being spent, the Railways and the general public naturally expect a greater amount of protection while travelling. It is, therefore, necessary that some stern and effective measure need to be taken to curb the incidence of such crimes in order to engender a feeling security and confidence amongst the travelling public, particularly in the States of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

I have invited the Home Minister along with senior Police Officers of the five States, viz. West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Orissa to a meeting on 21st March, 1973 to discuss measures to reduce the incidence of such crime. I do hope that as a result of all these discussions, we will be able to evolve some concrete measures to check these crimes.

The Railways have passed through a difficult year. The agitations in Assam and Andhra have adversely affected operations and revenues. The drought and power cut have caused more difficulties. Though law and order conditions have improved in Eastern India, there is need for much more improvement in Security for the travelling public and the freight in transit.

The Railwaymen have done a commendable job under very difficult conditions. I congratulate them.

Sir, may I say a word about Railway Board also? Attacks have been made on senior officers of the Railways, especially the Railway Board. These are not helpful to the healthy traditions that we are striving to set up.

Why should we be so much concerned about the Railway Board? What is it after all? It is a body of five senior officers—four of the rank of Secretary and one that of Principal Secretary. There are other Ministers also in the Government of India

[Shri L. N. Mishra]

where we have Secretaries and Principal Secretary. There is nothing special about the Railway Board. If there is anything, it is only this that it meets jointly and takes decisions on important issues on the spot itself.

In a democratic set-up like ours, Parliament is sovereign and supreme and it represents the will of the people. It is the duty of the Minister to implement the policies and directives laid down by Parliament. The Railway Board has no option but to implement the policy and decision as laid down by the Ministers in his capacity as an executive agent of the Parliament.

With hon. members I would like to share one feeling and that is that it is no use quarrelling with our own too's nor is it wise to condemn them. I will seek the indulgence of the House to say that the Board members and other senior officers are a hard-workers and dedicated lot of men who have worked their way up after serving in the field most of their service. They are all struggling to move the traffic under difficult conditions. (*Interruptions*).

Before I sit down, I would like to say that I have considered the points made by hon. members in this House very carefully. While framing the budget proposals, I had taken special care to see that the needs of the common man are not adversely affected and the modest revision of freights and fares should not have any significant effect on the cost of living. However, in the light of the various points made by hon. members in this House and in the other House, I feel I could go a Step further in relieving the burden on the common man.

I accordingly propose that third class fares upto and including a distance of 20 kms. instead of 15 kms., as suggested by me, earlier, should be exempted from the increase. This will apply both to ordinary passenger trains and to mail and express trains.

This would benefit some 140 million more third class passengers. In all, including 500 million passengers mentioned by me earlier, there will be some 640 million passengers or 42 per cent of the total third class travelling public excluding season ticket holders who will not have to pay any increase.

As regards freight rates, I propose that firewood, charcoal, gur, shakkar and jagri should be exempted from the increase in freight rates. These are all essential commodities used by the common man mainly.

Even though all these measures would increase the gap of Rs. 8.65 crores to Rs. 9.80 crores, I am sure the House will welcome these reliefs. I have done. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You will have another occasion when the discussion on the Railway demands for grants comes up.

Would you like to avail of the opportunity now or at that time?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Now.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You can put a question each, only a question; do not make a speech. The Minister will kindly note down the question and give a comprehensive reply.

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: If I am able to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: When he wants notice, he may say so.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): Has any decision been taken by the Railway Ministry regarding payment of bonus to the railway employees? Other public undertaking employees are getting it and there is serious heart-burning among railway employees and they have taken a strike ballot.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI (Calcutta South): For the last 20 years Balurghat (headquarters of the West Dinajpur district of West Bengal under the NF Railway) is

without a railway link. In spite of assurances given by the Railway Ministry, nothing has been done to implement the proposal for a railway link in Balurghat.

Also nothing has been said about restoration or resumption of the work of the Martin Railway either by taking it over or by a new BG line. Will the present budget provision include implementation of these two requirements this year?

DR. SARADISH ROY (Bolpur): I want to know when a decision will be taken regarding the opening of the Martin Burn Light Railway from Howrah to Amta.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD (Bhagalpur): May I know whether the non-reply of the hon. Minister about the mail or fast train on the Bhagalpur line is a meaningful silence for consideration or a negation asking us to do something more?

ड० लक्ष्मी नारायणपांडेय (मंसौर) :
रेलवे कर्मचारियों को बोनस का लाभ मिलेगा या नहीं इसके बारे में मंत्री महोदय ने कोई उत्तर नहीं दिया, इस के बारे में वह बतलायें। मैं यह भी जानना चाहता हूँ कि इन्दौर से दोहद और गुना से मन्खी लाइन के बारे में क्या कार्रवाई की गई है? इसी प्रकार अजमेर-खंडवा लाइन के बारे में भी आप निश्चित रूप से बतायें कि उसे ब्राड गेज में बदल रहे हैं या नहीं?

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY (Cooch-Bihar): I have preferred to the matter earlier. I would like to know from the hon. Railway Minister when the restoration of the flood-affected railway line in the Northeast Frontier Railway, from Jalpaiguri to Haldibari, will be taken up. I would also like to have this railway line from Lataguri to Changribandh taken up soon. Then, we find that about the Sunderban region in West Bengal there are several proposals piled up

in the Railway Board. I want to know whether the hon. Railway Minister will kindly consider to accept them as early as possible.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN (Telli-cherry): I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether some new rail lines will be given in Kerala, for example, a line from Tellicherry to Mysore and from Cochin to Kayamkulam.

Another thing is this. There is a report appearing in the press that the Jayanti Janata Express from Delhi to Cochin, which has been recently introduced, has been cancelled. The Minister might give a categorical answer that it is not cancelled.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SINHA (Muzaffarpur): May I know from the hon. Minister whether it is proposed to construct the Chitauri Ghat-Bagaha bridge for connecting Uttar Pradesh with that side of North Bihar?

श्री रामचन्द्र बिकल : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मंत्री महोदय ने स्वयं कहा था कि वह शाहदरा सहारनपुर रेलवे लाइन के बारे में बतलायेंगे कि क्या हो रहा है। लेकिन उन के भाषण में उस की कोई खर्चा नहीं है। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि वह इस रेलवे लाइन को कब चलाना चाहते हैं और किस रूप में चलना चाहते हैं?

SHRI D. N. TIWARY (Gopalganj): In view of the fact that all approach roads to stations are in a very bad condition and they are not fit for vehicular traffic, may I know whether the Minister has decided anything about repairing them fully so that passengers may not have any inconvenience?

श्री राम रतन शर्मा : (बांदा) : मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि मंत्री महोदय बांदा में ओवरब्रिज बनाने और झांसी इलाहाबाद एक्सप्रेस रेलवे के बारे में क्या विचार रखते हैं?

श्री जगन्नाथ मिश्र : (मधुवनी) : जब से ग्लोबे बजट पर विचार प्रारम्भ हुआ है तभी से बिहार के सभी सदस्यों ने, बिना किसी झपकाव के, इस बात की मांग की है कि पटना में रेलवे सर्विस कमिशन का दफ्तर खोला जाये। मैं माननीय मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूँ कि वह इस बारे में क्या करने जा रहे हैं ?

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Akola): In view of the fact that there is a severe drought condition in Maharashtra and also in other parts of the country, there is a great difficulty for those who have migrated from their places to nearby areas, and representations from those persons are there and I had myself sent a representation from my region that those people who have come to those regions want at least some time to go back to see the condition of their families they have left behind. Would the hon. Minister consider the request of such persons for the issue of passes at least in this emergency period, so that they can go home? They have now no money to go. Will you consider their request? I have a negative reply from you, and that is why I ask you

SHRI DHAMANKAR (Bhiwandi): There is an acute shortage of wagons on the Bhayndar-Basin station and the salt-producing co-operative society is suffering and the salt production is going to suffer. May I know from the hon. Minister whether more wagons would be supplied to the Bhayndar-Basin area?

PROF. S. L. SAKSENA (Maharajganj): Gorakhpur is such a district; the hon. Minister knows about it. I have suggested a line from Gorakhpur to Maharajganj, to Moti upto Nepal border. Will you kindly look into it and give us what we want?

SHRI SHANKERRAO SAVANT: The hon. Minister's silence about rail lines in Maharashtra is puzzling. I should like to know if conversion of metre-gauge line into broad gauge line is the accepted policy of the Govern-

ment and if in several cases conversion has been done by the Railways at their own cost then why is it that a converting some metre-gauge line in Maharashtra, the State Government is called upon to participate in the cost? Secondly, what is the correct estimated cost of the West-coast railway line; it is increasing from day to day? When will the project be sanctioned?

SHRI D. K. PANDA (Bhanjanagar): As far as Orissa is concerned, the hon. Minister is fully aware that it is at the lowest rung as far as railway lines are concerned. There was one announcement but full justice has not been done. Will any attention be given to the positive demand that a line be put from Gopalpur to Bolangir via Aska-Bhanjanagar?

SHRI DINESH CHANDRA GO-SWAMI (Gauhati): The hon. Minister said that the broad-gauge line to Gauhati was under active consideration. I am rather afraid of these words 'active consideration'; I heard it earlier also. I was given an assurance in the Railway Consultative Committee meeting at Bangalore that during the Budget this year there would be a positive announcement. Why has this commitment not been kept up by the Railway Administration? By what time are they likely to come up with additional proposals for this line?

SHRI C. CHITTIBABU (Chingleput): Have the Railways any scheme of laying a double track between Tambaram and Chingleput?

श्री के० एन० तिवारी : (बेतिया) : मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि पटना में गंगा नदी के ऊपर जो पुल बन रहा है वह रेल कम रोड बनाया जायेगा या नहीं।

श्री गंगा चरण दीक्षित : (खंडवा) : क्या मंत्री महोदय यह बतलाने की कृपा करेंगे कि खंडवा से दोहद और इन्दौर से दोहद इन दो लाइनों को बनाने का निश्चय.

किया गया है या नहीं? अगर इन दोनों के लिए निश्चय नहीं किया गया है, तो क्यों नहीं किया गया है?

SHRI RAJDEO SINGH (Jaunpur): The Minister has given new lines to so many States but he has ignored the biggest State, U.P., in the country. Is he prepared to consider its claim at least now?

श्री राधकान्त सिंह (जतारा) : मैं रेलवे मंत्री का ध्यान इस बात की ओर दिवाना चाहता हूँ कि बिहार में जितनी रेलवे लाइनों की घोषणा हुई है उस सब की सब उत्तर बिहार में है। दक्षिण बिहार में गया से बडदाकाना वाया जतारा हजारीबाग की जो योजना विचारधीन है, क्या उस के बारे में घोषणा की जायेगी? यदि की जायेगी तो कब तक?

SHRI CHANDULAL CHANDRAKAR (Durg): In his reply today the Minister has completely forgotten the biggest State, area-wise, M.P. A survey was going on for a line from Bailadila in Bastar to Rajra in Durg district and I was expecting a reply. Will he say something about it now?

SHRI BASHESHWAR NATH BHARGAVA: The Railway Minister's silence is very conspicuous. Earth-work was started in the year 1899 for a railway line from Ajmer to Kota. In view of the very severe famine conditions there will he consider the feasibility of starting this line immediately to give employment to the famine stricken people?

SHRI P. R. SHENOY (Udipi): Will the new railway line between Mangalore and Apta be accepted in principle at least immediately and detailed survey be taken up during the year 1973-74?

श्री राधकान्त (टोंक) : हिन्दुस्तान का ज़ाद होने के बाद से बराबर यह मांग की

जा रही है कि टोंक को रेलवे लाइन से जोड़ा जाय लेकिन टोंक को पूरा नहीं किया गया है। पहले जब विरोधी दल वाले ज़तते थे तब कहा जाता था कि ये ही रेलवे लाइन लाने में लेकिन इस बार तो कांग्रेस बहुत भारी बहुमत में जीती है। क्या अब भी छाप इस साल टोंक को रेलवे लाइन से जोड़ने की कृपा नहीं करेंगे?

14.00 hrs.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: There has to be an end to that. Order please. I was lenient thinking that Members would be asking a few questions, but everybody is inspired by somebody else and is asking questions. There has to be an end to this. (Interruptions) Order please. Hon. Members may exercise restraint.

I think the Minister can reply if he has anything to say. Hon. Members can avail of any other opportunity when it comes.

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: Sir, you will appreciate it will not be possible to reply to all the questions raised. About the laying of railway lines—conversion from meter gauge to broad gauge there is question of financial implications. Whatever proposals are, I had mentioned in my speech. Today, I have mentioned some of them. Hon. Members may look at that.

About the suggestions that have been made to-day, I will get them examined, the survey has to be made and financial feasibility has to be seen.

I would request hon. Members to support the idea that we want to change the criteria from having new lines. If we stick to older one, 3 million tonnes traffic must be there. I do not think many new lines can be justified. We have to change the conception itself and think as to how the backward areas can be developed. This idea and principle would guide.

[Shri L. N. Mishra]

From Howrah to Amta—that proposal has been agreed to. The Chief Minister was here. There was the problem for a track. We discussed with the Chief Minister and Shri S. S. Ray went to Calcutta and he met with all the M.L.As of the area. They are agreeable to have a broad-gauge line and that is approved.

Saharanpur—this is also there.

About other railway lines, it is very difficult for me to say straightway.

About Gauhati, I have already explained. It will be there. (Interruptions).

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order, please order.

श्री रामचन्द्र बिकल : शाहदरा-सहारनपुर लाइन के बारे में भी तो बतायें ।

श्री एल० एन० मिश्र : वह मंजूर हो चुकी है ।

श्री रामचन्द्र बिकल : मंजूर तो घाट महीने हुए तब हो गई थी । लेकिन चलेगी कब ?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: Our respectable Member Shri Tewari raised a question about the approach road. If it was maintained earlier, why it should not be maintained now. I will look into it.

About the issue of passes for drought areas, I do not think it will be a feasible proposition. I will look into it.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Why is it not feasible?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA: It was said that UP is a very big State and there is no new proposal. But Saharanpur is in UP and the line from Lucknow to Samastipur is also in UP. About Orissa, there is provision in my original

budget speech for access to Paradip port. About Madhya Pradesh also I have mentioned in my original budget speech.

About bonus, it is very difficult for me to say now. We have to wait for the Pay Commission's recommendations. Even now there is a very heavy burden on the railways. About bonus, my mind is open and I cannot say anything at this stage. (Interruptions).

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Nothing more on the railway budget will go on the record now. (Interruptions).

14.07 hrs.

GENERAL BUDGET, 1973-74— GENERAL DISCUSSION

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We now take up the general discussion on the General Budget. There is a remarkable lack of interest on the part of speakers from the opposition on the first day of discussion on the General Budget. Shri Dinen Bhattacharyya, who was to initiate the debate, wants to speak tomorrow. Shri Bhogendra Jha, Shri Murugnadam and others from the opposition are absent. In the circumstances, I will call Mr. Bhagat to initiate the debate.

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT (Shahabad): Sir, the Finance Minister, when he presented this year's budget, set certain immediate objectives as against the long-term objectives. These are, to neutralise the inflationary pressures that have been generated in the economy over a number of years, to improve growth through a vigorous effort of increasing savings and investments, to achieve a greater viability in the external front to achieve self-reliance, to make a big dent into the unemployment situation through increasing both urban and rural employment and lastly to cater to the most neglected sections of society, known as weaker sections and to provide the basic minimum needs to the large majority of people. These are