

I think I have covered most of the points. Wherever delay, legitimate or otherwise, is likely to occur, I can only give a categorical assurance that if these things are brought to my notice I shall always look into them and render all the assistance I can. I do not mind even looking into individual applications or people approaching me; because, after all, unless the disease is properly analysed or the malady properly categorised, it will be difficult to help very much. In a general way we are trying to help. But if hon. Members take greater interest in the process of industrial development and the projects thereof, I can assure them that I shall be reciprocating the interest in the schemes that they bring forward.

I beg to commend the Bill to the House.

Shri Mulchand Dube: May I know what plans Government have for the establishment of industries for the manufacture of heavy industrial goods in U.P.?

Shri M. M. Shah: I really skipped over that, but I would be glad to inform the hon. Member that as far as the public sector and heavy industries are concerned, one proposal under consideration is for the manufacture of aluminium at Rihand in U.P. which I mentioned when I went there recently; also, a synthetic rubber factory near about Bareilly is contemplated in the public sector. The Railway Ministry are also doing something in U.P. for the manufacture of some of the railway equipment. And even in the planning of the heavy industries and the distribution thereof, we have repeatedly been emphasising that the regional distribution of heavy industries even in the public sector is a point which will be constantly borne in mind by the planners in the different Ministries, and particularly in our Ministry.

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

The motion was adopted.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Shri U. M. Trivedi (Chittor): May I make one request? We have been taken by surprise today so far as the Terminal Tax on Railway Passengers Bill is concerned. We never expected it to reach today. If it is the general consensus of opinion, if all Members agree, I request that at least today, we may adjourn for Lunch. We have not been able to take any lunch. If we sit for the Terminal Taxes Bill, those hon. Members who want to take part in it, will not be able to go for lunch. At least today, we may adjourn for lunch.

Shri Kamath (Hoshangabad): 10 hours have been allotted for the Medical Council Bill.

Mr. Speaker: I will ask the hon. Minister to make his speech. The Private Members' Business comes on at 2-30. The hon. Minister can make his speech.

Shri Kamath: For one hour.

Mr. Speaker: If there is time.

The House will now take up the other Bill.

TERMINAL TAX ON RAILWAY PASSENGERS BILL

The Deputy Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Alagesan): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to provide for the levy of a terminal tax on passengers carried by railway from or to certain places of pilgrimage or where fairs, melas or exhibitions are held, be taken into consideration."

[Shri Alagesan]

As hon. Members are probably aware, the terminal taxes on passengers carried by railways now in force are "pilgrim taxes" levied in respect of persons going to and returning from specified pilgrim centres and collected as part of the railway fare. The only exception is the terminal tax collected in respect of Howrah which is not a pilgrim centre. These pilgrim taxes were leviable under the local enactments passed before 1-4-1937, on which date the Government of India Act, 1935, came into force. That Act made terminal taxes on passengers carried by railways a Central subject, but at the same time, authorised the continuance of the levy of the existing terminal taxes on passengers carried by railways until provision to the contrary was made by the Central Legislature. Under the Constitution also, terminal taxes on passengers carried by railways have been placed in the Union List, but under the saving provision of Article 277, the States or municipalities or local bodies are authorised to continue to levy the terminal taxes already existing. This meant that whenever there has been any need for the levy of a fresh terminal tax, or for the enhancement of any of the existing terminal taxes, on the basis of a representation from a local body on the ground of fresh or additional expenditure on health and sanitation measures required at a particular place for the large number of persons visiting a pilgrim or other centre in the jurisdiction of that local body, recourse has had to be had to special legislation invoking also the Ordinance making powers of the President in some cases. This piecemeal handling of cases, as they arose, it will be agreed, is not entirely satisfactory, and the State Governments, who were consulted also agreed that general enabling legislation should be passed in this regard so that any particular place could then be added to the list of railway stations in respect of which terminal tax could be levied, or increased, by a notification of the Central Government. The Central

Government will, of course, act on the advice of the State Governments in this matter.

For the present, it is proposed to confine the levy of terminal taxes to passengers carried by railways to and from places of pilgrimage, melas, fairs and exhibitions. With the increasing sanitary, medical and other facilities that the pilgrims and other travellers expect the local bodies to provide on such occasions, it is only fair that a contribution towards the finances of such bodies should be made by a small levy along with the railway fare, as in fact is already being done for specified places, so as to augment the limited resources at the disposal of local bodies.

It is in order to achieve the aforesaid objectives that the present Bill is being submitted to the House. When the Bill becomes law, all the existing terminal taxes in various States will cease to exist as such, and will be incorporated in the notification that will be issued by the Central Government under the Act.

Mr. Speaker: Motion moved:

"That the Bill to provide for the levy of a terminal tax on passengers carried by railway from or to certain places of pilgrimage or where fairs, melas or exhibitions are held, be taken into consideration."

There is nothing important. Nobody has even tabled any amendment.

Shri Kamath (Hoshangabad): It was expected to come on Monday.

Mr. Speaker: A number of amendments have been tabled in respect of other Bills. There is no controversy in this.

Shri Shree Narayan Das (Darbhanga Central): I would like to have certain informations although I support the Bill. It would have been better if the hon. Minister had provided this House with information as regards the existing taxes levied by the different States, by the different

local bodies, so that we can see the basis on which this maximum has been fixed.

13.27 hrs.

[PANDIT THAKUR DAS BHARGAVA in the Chair]

We should like to have a full picture of the state of affairs in regard to terminal taxes as to how these taxes are levied and collected by the Railways. That would have enabled the House to consider this maximum and minimum. It is said that for air-conditioned or first class, it will be Rs. 1-8-0 in respect of every single ticket and Rs. 3-0-0 in respect of every return ticket. So also with regard to the second and third classes. In regard to the third class, the maximum is eight annas. It is in the fitness of things that this Bill has been brought forward in this House. The Constitution has placed this item in the Union List. It was for the Government of India to legislate much earlier. Better late than never. Now that the Central Government is taking up this responsibility of collecting the terminal taxes for the different places of pilgrimage, fairs and exhibitions for all the States, I think a fair idea should be given as to what was the amount of tax collected by the Railways in different States and how these taxes were spent by the different authorities, and on whom these taxes were levied. In the absence of this data, although we support the Bill, we would require the information to understand the basis on which this maximum has been provided.

In clause 9 of the Bill, some exemptions are made with regard to children not over three years of age, police officers travelling on railway warrants and persons travelling on military warrants. I think there must be some mention of Members of Parliament because we also travel on passes. I do not know whether these terminal taxes will be levied on Members of Parliament while travelling to and from places of pilgrimage or not. In order to obviate difficul-

ties, I think this item should be included so that legal questions may not arise. Under the Act, though Members of Parliament are not to pay railway fares, they will have to pay terminal taxes if they travel to and from some places.

Shri Kamath: They should not be exempted.

Shri Shree Narayan Das: It would be better if it is included in this item under item (d). That would obviate difficulties.

Then, there is an exemption in respect of passengers within a radius of forty miles from the notified place. I would like to suggest that this radius should be increased at least by 10 miles and within a radius of 50 miles, there should not be any levy. I would like to suggest these amendments. I do not know what are the provisions in the different States under the different enactments. I would suggest that this figure of 40 miles should be increased to 50 miles.

Then there is also the power of the Central Government to vary the rates for short and long distances. Short distance has been defined as 150 miles and long distance over and above that. In regard to this also, I would like to suggest that 200 miles should be included to come under short distance and more than 200 miles should be considered long distance.

With these suggestions I support this Bill. I think it is within the competence of this House to pass this legislation. It should have been brought before the House much earlier. I support this and hope the suggestions made by me will be considered.

Shri Kamath: I have been provoked to take part in this discussion mainly because I have recently been to a part of our country with which the hon. Deputy Minister is very closely associated and which he very well knows, better perhaps than myself. That is a pilgrim centre called Palani in the South. I was there last month and the Municipal Board

[Shri Kamath]

and the Panchayat there requested me to convey their unanimous suggestion to the Government that because over three lakhs of pilgrims come there every year—that is what I was told, I do not know whether it is correct, the Minister might know better—and the Panchayat has not got adequate finance to look after the amenities of the pilgrims, they would welcome a pilgrims tax and that the collection should be made over to them, not wholly perhaps but a good part of it. I do not know whether the Minister is aware of this fact and whether any representation has been made to him directly by the Palani people or the Panchayat or the Municipal Board. So, I wish to begin by drawing the attention of the Minister to this particular matter.

Coming to general matters, I would support the demand made by my hon. friend Shri Shree Narayan Das, that we have not been provided with adequate figures and material for a fruitful debate on this matter. I could hear the Minister not very clearly throughout. His voice fell and rose, and he was reading with his face lowered. Therefore I could not get all that he said. But whatever I could catch was rather vague and is not conducive in my opinion to very fruitful debate on this question in the House. He said that this terminal tax was first levied on April 1, 1937 about 20 years ago under an old enactment.

Shri Alagesan: I said that it continued to be levied under local enactments passed up till 1-4-1937.

Mr. Chairman: The third line of the Statement of Objects and Reasons also says the same thing.

Shri Kamath: We do not know what the position has been since that date.

Shri Alagesan: All that is contained in the Statement of Objects and Reasons.

Shri Kamath: As my hon. friend asked, at how many places is this tax

being levied today, what have the collections been in recent years? How has it been utilised and disbursed for what purposes? All this would have been very useful for us. Partly because the other Bill was on the anvil, we did not make the request. Otherwise I and some of us would have made the request that this material should be provided and on Monday when the Bill comes up, as was expected, we could have a more useful debate.

I remember that during the Purna Kumbh Mela at Allahabad which led to a disaster three or four years ago in which many people were killed for lack of proper arrangements by the Government, the Government levied a terminal tax on lakhs of pilgrims going to the Kumbh at Prayag by an ordinance when the House was not in session. We did not grudge that. I was not here in Parliament at that time, I came in later, but Parliament did not grudge that. But Parliament wanted to know how this huge amount collected from the pilgrims going to Prayag was spent, and I do not know whether the Railway Minister could enlighten us on that point today. In spite of so much money going to the coffers of the Government, hundreds of pilgrims were alleged to have been killed because of lack of proper arrangements. Therefore, I would impress upon the Minister to see that these terminal tax collections are properly utilised and that there is a proper authority to arrange for their proper utilisation and not merely waste it as it has happened on so many occasions. How much of this collection will go to the local authorities for providing amenities to the pilgrims for gathering at a particular place, and how much will go into the coffers of the Government should be made clear. After all, thousands pilgrims come to the spot and the local authorities must be given some finance for the management of their own affairs in connection with the fairs or melas that take place there with which this Bill is connected.

Then, I would request the Minister to let us know in recent years, apart from this Purna Kumbh Mela at Prayag which took place in 1953, I believe, on how many such occasions of big melas this tax has been levied. No material has been supplied. I myself am at a loss to make any effective contribution to the debate. Without facts and figures and with only a bald statement of Objects and Reasons, it is very unfair to the House that it should be asked to approve of the Bill and vote on it. Again I would make the request voiced by my friend Shri U. M. Trivedi that this should be held over till we get these figures when we can hold a more useful debate during next week after the Foreign affairs debate is over.

Mr. Chairman: In view of the observations made by Shri Kamath, may I just know from the hon. Minister if he proposes to provide any such material as has been suggested to the House?

Shri Alagesan: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: If that is so, I do not think any useful purpose will be served by continuing this debate at this hour. The Members were under the impression that the other Bill would come up and they also do not seem to be prepared to go on with the Bill. In view of the fact that the hon. Minister is prepared to provide the material, I do not think any useful purpose will be served by continuing the debate. Therefore, I adjourn the debate.

Shri Alagesan: My submission was that in reply to the debate I would be placing the information.

Mr. Chairman: Shri Kamath said he wanted more material for the debate, he said the material was not provided. I asked the hon. Minister and understood him to say that he proposed to provide it.

Shri Alagesan: I only said that all the clarifications that the hon. Members who just now spoke wanted I shall be able to supply by way of reply.

Shri Kamath: It should come at the outset.

Mr. Chairman: I understood the hon. Minister to say that he was agreeable to provide the material. That is how I understood him. Anyhow, I should think that in view of what has happened we are not in a position to properly debate this Bill. I find the attendance in the House is very thin. Therefore, I think it would be better if we postpone this debate so far as this Bill is concerned. And if there is any material with the hon. Minister I would request him to furnish the House with the material also. After all, these are all very relevant questions: how much money was gathered, where it went or how it was spent, how it is proposed to spend it in future. All these points are very material so far as the debate on this Bill is concerned. I therefore adjourn this debate to a future date.

As regards the other Bill, does the hon. Minister propose that we should proceed with it?

The Minister in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Shri Datar): I am ready.

Mr. Chairman: He is ready, but he sees there is no proper attendance in the House.

Shri Datar: I have no objection if it is adjourned.

Mr. Chairman: I think in the interests of proper debate I should adjourn this Bill also. So, the House is adjourned till 2-30.

An Hon. Member: So, at 2-30 this Bill will be taken up.

Mr. Chairman: No Private Members' Business will be taken up.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Half Past Two of the Clock.