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Uneconomic Railway Lines

*157. SHRI RABI RAY:

SHRI T. D. RAMABADRAN:

SHRI MAYAVAN:

SHRI ANBUCHERIAN:

SHRI DEORAO PATIL:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Madras, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab States have opposed the Railway Board's proposal to close down uneconomic railway lines in their areas;

(b) if so, the reasons for their opposing the proposal;

(c) the reaction of Government thereto; and

(d) the amount likely to be saved due to this decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH): (a) No, Sir. We have not yet heard from these State Governments.

(b) and (c). In view of the answer to part (a), the question does not arise.

(d) The loss on the working of the four lines in Madras, two in the Punjab and one in Madhya Pradesh, in respect of which references have been made to the State Governments, is estimated at about Rs. 40 lakhs per year.

श्री रवि राय : इस बारे में तामिलनाडु के ट्रांसपोर्ट मन्त्री ने बाकायदा विरोध किया है। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या सरकार कोई ठेकेदार है कि जिस लाइन से उसको हानि होती है, लाभ नहीं होता है, उसको वह हटा देगी। इस स्थिति में वहाँ की जनता कैसे सफर करेगी? उसको तकलीफ होगी। इस लिए सरकार को ठेकेदार का दृष्टिकोण नहीं अपनाना चाहिए। क्या सरकार इस बात पर

विचार कर रही है कि इस फ़ैसले को बदल दिया जाये और इस योजना को हाथ में न लिया जाये, बल्कि अनइकानोमिक लाइन्स को इकानोमिक बनाने की कोशिश की जाये, क्योंकि सम्बद्ध क्षेत्रों की जनता और सरकार उसका विरोध कर रहे हैं?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: Before taking a decision regarding the dismantling of any of these lines, the matter will be referred to the State Government concerned and, if necessary the Central Government would be in a position to give them some financial assistance so that, if any difficulties are found out due to the transport being taken out from the Railways point of view, they can have it by way of additional road transport. Unless and until the State Government's views have been received and considered, no final action is being taken in the matter.

श्री रवि राय : क्या मद्रास सरकार से अभी तक कोई विरोध आया है?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: We have not received any intimation from the Government of Madras as yet.

श्री देवराव पाटिल : क्या एक बैलफेयर स्टेट में गवर्नमेंट का यह जरूरी कर्तव्य नहीं है कि किसी क्षेत्र में वहाँ के लोगों के हित के लिए रेलवे लाइन्स को चलाया जाये? मैं यह भी जानना चाहता हूँ कि मध्य प्रदेश में कौन कौन सी रेलवे लाइन्स अलाभप्रद हैं।

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: I have already stated that we have not taken any final decision about it.

SHRI N. N. PATEL: May I know whether it is a fact that the Railway Board is considering to close down narrow gauge lines, particularly in Gujarat, and if so, the reasons thereof?

MR. SPEAKER: The Government has not taken any final decision about closing down the lines.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: There are about 70 lines, including narrow gauge, under consideration. As I have already stated, we have referred the matter to the State Government concerned and we are asking for their views and recommendations in the matter. After we get their views, the necessary action will be taken.

SHRI G. VISHWANATHAN: It is a fantastic decision of the Railway Board—I do not want to call it foolish—coming like a bolt from the blue for the residents of the Nilgiris and tourism. I quote a Tamil proverb:

Padippathu Ramayanam, Idippathu Perumal Koil

There is the great Ramayana, you read the Ramayana and destroy the temple of Perumal.

We are speaking so much on the development of tourism day by day and, at the same time, thinking of dismantling the line which leads to the queen of hill stations. The main reason for them is that it is uneconomical. It takes 4 hours to cover the distance of 32 miles from Mettupalayam to Ooty whereas the bus takes 2½ hours. If the train is speeded up, they will definitely get heavy traffic and goods earnings. Will the hon. Minister consider the question of speeding up the train? Secondly, the line was constructed in 1899—thanks to the British rule—and the Railway Ministry which could not claim of laying down so many railway lines in India, may, at least, refrain from dismantling the existing well-laid railway lines.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: As I have already state, there are about 70 such lines which are uneconomic and, on a conservative basis, the total loss on these lines come to Rs. 6.69 crores. The railway line mentioned by the hon. Member is one of them. But I have already said that it is not a decision. It is a proposal which has been sent to each and every State Government concerned for their views. In the

even the Railways propose to discontinue these lines, we want to know the reaction of the State Government concerned. Unless and until we got their report, we are not going to take a decision.

श्री यशवन्त सिंह कुशवाह : क्या सरकार की दृष्टि में अलाभप्रद लाइनों की ब्याख्या यह है कि जो लाइनों साढ़े सात फ्रीसदी से कम नफा कमाती है, वे हानिकारक और अलाभप्रद है ? और ऐसी हालत में क्या जिन लाइनों से सचमुच में एक प्रतिशत भी घाटा नहीं हो रहा है, साढ़े सात प्रतिशत से कम लाभ है उनको शासन लाभप्रद योजनाएं मानता है ?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: As I have already stated, we have not taken any decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS rose—

MR. SPEAKER: The same reply will be there for all the questions about Maharashtra or Andhra Pradesh or Gujarat, namely, that they have not taken any decision. (*Interruptions*) Anyway, I now call the Lady Member.

SHRIMATI SHARDA MUKERJEE: We quite appreciate the Minister's difficulties, but I would like to know this from the hon. Minister. For years this has been going on uneconomic lines merely because of the rivalry between Road Transport and Rail Transport. Has the Ministry made any efforts to bring about some co-ordination, so that the local people do not suffer? Road Transport really comes within the purview of the State Government and the Railways come under the Central Government. The rivalry between these two means inconvenience to the local people. Therefore, has any effort been made to bring about co-ordination?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: There is an arrangement; there is a co-ordinating authority which goes into these matters. The State Government should always approach the Railways

before they issue any road permit to a place where a railway line is running parallel to road, but in most cases, without giving weight to the Railways views the State Government issues permits to suit their own purpose. These are the particular reasons why these lines are remaining unremunerative.

श्री भगोयान साबू : राजस्थान में चुरू फतेहपुर लाइन से सरकार के कहने के हिसाब से नुकसान हो रहा है। इसलिए इस पर सरकार ने दुगुना किराया कर रखा है। तो मैं मन्त्री महोदय से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि क्या ऐसा और भी कहीं यह दुगुना किराया किसी दूसरी रेलवे लाइन पर भी लागू है ?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: I could not follow that particular question. If he mentions any particular lines and if he gives notice, I will look into it

SHRI NANJA GOWDER: The hon. Minister for Railways has, in his Budget speech yesterday, stated that utmost care will be exercised to make the most judicious selection of the branch lines for closure. May, I therefore, know whether special consideration would be given to Nilgiris Railway, Mettupalaiyam-Ootacamund line, in view of the fact that Nilgiris is an important place from tourist point of view and also because Nilgiris District is situated in the middle of three States, namely, Madras, Kerala and Mysore, and there is scope for future expansion of the line to Calicut and Mysore?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: I have already stated we have referred the matter to the State Governments and as soon as we hear from the State Governments, action will be taken.

श्री रणधीर सिंह : मिस्टर स्पीकर, सर, आपके मार्फत मैं मिनिस्टर साहब से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि 70-75 लाख आदमियों की बड़ी पुरानी मांग है और वह यह है कि सन् 47 से पहले रोहतक से पानीपत एक 40 मील लम्बी लाइन चलती थी और वह 50

साल से लगातार चल रही थी, लड़ाई के बाद वह उठा ली गई। अब यह लाइन रोहतक से गोहाना तक 22 मील बन चुकी है और अगर रोहतक से पानीपत को मिला लिया जाय तो बड़ा मुनाफा होगा। तो यह मैं पूछना चाहता हूँ कि रोहतक से पानीपत को कब मिलाएँगे जिससे सरकार को ज्यादा से ज्यादा मुनाफा हो ?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: We have no proposal like that.

श्री श्रींकार लाल बेरवा : श्रीमन्, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि सरकार ने जो घाटे की लाइनें थीं उन्हें हटाने का निर्णय कर लिया है तो क्या सरकार ने अलाभकर मिनिस्ट्रों को भी हटाने का निर्णय कर लिया है ?

SHRI MANUBHAI PATEL: In abolishing these uneconomic lines, the Railway Board cannot be the right authority to opine objectively because the Board only looks from the viewpoint of income. So do Government contemplate appointing a committee or commission to go into the details of these lines and then give a report?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: The Railway Board will be definitely go into the economics of lines. But the Board is not taking any unilateral action. That is why it has referred the matter to the State Governments. It is awaiting their replies.

SHRI DHIRESWAR KALITA: The hon. Minister has stated that there are 71 uneconomic lines. Which are those lines?

MR. SPEAKER: He need not read the list. Could he place the list on the Table?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: Yes, I will place it on the Table.

SHRI K. NARAYANA RAO: Of these uneconomic lines, may I know whether the bulk are of narrow gauge? If so, by improvement or change over to broad gauge, could they become

economic? If so, are Government taking any steps in that direction?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: We are already reviewing all these lines. Our intention is to find out which are the lines that could be withdrawn and which are those which with some improvement could be run economically. That is the investigation going on.

SHRI S. K. TAPURIAH: Give it to the private sector; they will run it economically.

श्री गुणानन्द ठाकुर : क्या मन्त्री महोदय यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि अनेकोनामिक लाइन की परिभाषा क्या है और जहाँ कि एकोनामी बढ़ने की भी गुंजाइश होती है वहाँ लाइन का रिक्लेमेशन नहीं किया जाता है। इस तरह की कई रेलवे लाइनें हैं जिन को पुनर्जीवित कर देने से सरकार को काफी मुनाफा होगा लेकिन उन लाइनों को भी सरकार नजरअन्दाज करती है। तो ऐसी जो लाइनें हैं उनको सरकार क्यों नहीं रिक्लेम करती ?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: Uneconomic lines are those the operation of which is resulting in a loss.

श्री मधु लिमये : उन्होंने पूछा है कि जिन रेल लाइनों से मुनाफा हो सकता है उनको पुनर्जीवित क्यों नहीं करते ?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: I have already stated that we are now investigating those lines, which with some improvement could be made remunerative. We will take a decision to discontinue only those lines which in spite of these things will remain uneconomical.

SHRI HEM BARUA: Since the railways are a public utility service, may I know if the decision of Government either to withdraw the lines or to extend them is going to be determined by the earnings consideration only and not by the consideration of convenience of the local people?

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THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI C. M. POONACHA): This relates to a transport aspect and the examination is from the point of view whether there are enough facilities available for transport of goods and passengers. If certain facilities do exist and both the railways and the roadways do not have enough traffic to carry and both are losing, it is time we looked into the matter and decided whether the roadways would deal with it or the railways. It has to be a judicious approach to the problem and therefore it needs certain studies. It is not as if a transport service for any reason has to continue to run at a loss continuously. That loss would be a burden on the community in the ultimate analysis. Therefore, it is only an examination to find out if other methods or facilities of transport are available, so that one or the other to the advantage of the community's interests could be withdrawn or closed. This is a matter which is being examined in all its aspects and with specific reference to the Chief Ministers and the State Governments of the areas who are in possession of all the facts. Again, I want to mention that the State Governments also are anxious to develop their road transport for the reason that it is a source of revenue and income to the State Government. They want to put in more number of trucks, buses and what not, they want to expand all that. So, if the roadways and railways continue to make losses, then that is not good for the economy of the country as a whole.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

मैसर्स ओवल इंडस्ट्रीज के साथ गंधक का सौदा

* 151. **श्री मधु लिमये :** क्या वाणिज्य मन्त्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या यह सच है कि राज्य व्यापार निगम के कुछ अधिकारियों ने मैसर्स ओवल इण्डस्ट्रीज कारपोरेटड न्यूयार्क के साथ गंधक