

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: Yes.

Conversion of Metre Gauge Line to Broad Gauge Line from New Cooch Behar to Bamanhat and Gitaldah (N. E. F. Railway)

*692. **SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY:** Will the Minister of RAILWAY be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry will take up the schemes in view of the great public demand, to convert metre gauge line on the Northeast Frontier Railway from New Cooch Behar to Bamanhat and Gitaldah to broad gauge line;

(b) whether two new broad gauge lines will be taken up to connect New Cooch Behar and Hashimara, and New Cooch Behar to Fakira Gram *via* Gulab Ganj; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI): (a) and (b). No, Sir.

(c) Due to paucity of funds and lack of traffic justification the suggested conversions/new lines cannot be considered at present.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY: Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that due to paucity of funds and lack of traffic justification, the suggested lines cannot be taken up. I can understand the question of paucity of funds. But what he means by lack of traffic justification I cannot understand. These are contradictory. Let the hon. Minister come straight and say, whether it is due to paucity of funds or lack of traffic justification.

Sir, I would like to submit to the hon. Minister, through you, the statement of the West Bengal Government that was submitted to the Fifth Finance Commission which I quote:

"The total agricultural income in the Cooch Behar district, according to 1962-63 statistics, is Rs. 20.22 crores."

According to the present market value, it will be about Rs. 35 crores to Rs. 40 crores. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the people in this district and a substantial portion of agricultural produce are the two

main cash crops of jute and tobacco. The line runs from New Cooch Behar to Bamanhat and Gitaldah, as mentioned in the Question, upto the East Pakistan border. The main cash crops of jute and tobacco are produced here. Unless the hon. Railway Minister offers certain facilities to poor agricultural producers in the locality to tranship their produce to better markets, how can these poor people earn their livelihood? The hon. Minister says that there is lack of traffic justification. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is prepared to have a survey, whether there is really traffic justification or not.

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: He has made two points. The hon. Member gave his own statistics, submitted by the West Bengal Government. But let me give my figures. About this Alipur Duar-Cooch Behar-Bamanhat Section for which conversion is suggested, the present carrying capacity is 11 trains, each way, per day. It is 53 KMs long. Now, actually, what we are carrying is, 3 passenger trains per day and 0.8 goods train per day, that is, a total of 3.8 per day. On this basis, I would humbly say that there is no justification.

Another point is about the Golakganj line for which the hon. Member has suggested conversion. There, the carrying capacity is eleven trains per day. Actually, 2 passenger trains run per day 0.7 goods train per day, that is a total of 2.7 per day. It is 47 KMs long. With the existing traffic, it is obvious, that there is hardly any justification for conversion or any construction, apart from the paucity of funds.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY: The argument given by the hon. Minister is not correct. Unless there are railway lines, how can there be traffic justification? How can traffic justification come up? We have seen many cases there is lines are being converted from metre-gauge to broad-gauge even without proper justification. Unless there are lines in between New Cooch Behar to Fakira Gram *via* Gulab Ganj and from New Cooch Behar to Hashimara, the question of traffic justification cannot arise even. The hon. Minister, in his Budget Speech, has said that in the Fourth Plan, 750 route KMs. are intended to be converted from metre-gauge to broad-gauge and, again, about the new

lines, 800 KMs are intended to be constructed in the Fourth Plan. . .

MR. SPEAKER: I do not want any debate on this. Please put your question.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY: Yes, kindly give me a minute only. Because of these metre-gauge lines running between New Cooch Behar to Bamanhat and Gitaldah, the jute and tobacco growers in the district are finding it very difficult to transport their produce. They are sending their produce through road carriers, on trucks. If this line is converted into broad-gauge, it will justify traffic. I would request the hon. Minister to make a survey and come with proper statistics whether it is justified or not.

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: As I have already pointed out, the present line capacity is 11 trains per day and, even if that is not justified, how will it be possible for us to convert it? I fully share the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member. If he could give some better figures, better performance, naturally we will consider it.

SHRI R. K. AMIN: This is a very broad question which everybody in every State is facing, that is, the conversion of narrow-gauge into broad-gauge. The Minister has stated that there is paucity of funds and that, whenever it is possible, it will be done. Instead of that, will he kindly give us definite guidelines for the conversion of narrow-gauge lines into broad-gauge and put them before the House?

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: I am sure, the hon. Member must have gone through the Report of the Uneconomic Branch Lines Committee, that all the narrow-gauge lines are being classified as uneconomic. That Report is under consideration. We have gone a step further. In his Budget Speech, the hon. Railway Minister, has announced the survey of certain lines also. So, we are fully seized of the matter. I fully appreciate the importance of even the existing narrow-gauge lines. All these things are under active consideration.

SHRIMATI JYOTSNA CHANDA: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government propose to convert any of the metre-gauge lines of the N.F. Railway in the

Fourth Plan and, if so, what are those lines?

MR. SPEAKER: You are widening the scope of this Question which relates to a particular area.

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: It has already been explained during the reply on the General Budget that we are actively considering the conversion of the line from Bongaigaon to Gauhati.

SHRI HEM BARUA: It has been said on the floor of the House that it will be extended upto Dibrugarh.

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: That line is separate.

श्री श्रीम प्रकाश त्यागी: जितनी उत्तर पूर्वी रेलवे की लाइन्स हैं उनके मीटर गेज और ब्राड गेज दोनों होने के कारण सुरक्षा को बहुत बड़ा खतरा है और एक गेज हो जाने से यानी ब्राड गेज हो जाने से सीमा की सुरक्षा रहेगी। इसलिए मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि धार्मिक दृष्टिकोण के अलावा क्या सुरक्षा का दृष्टिकोण भी सरकार के सामने रहता है? यदि रहता है तो किन किन लाइनों को ब्राड गेज में परिवर्तित करने का प्रायका इरादा है और कितनी देर में?

MR. SPEAKER: That does not arise out of the Question. This is about Railway Line from New Cooch Behar. That is not relevant.

श्री श्रीम प्रकाश त्यागी: यह नहीं है। उत्तर पूर्व रेलवे है।

श्री रोहन लाल जनुबंदी: हम लोगों के सामने धार्मिक दृष्टिकोण तो रहता ही है क्योंकि बगैर उसके कोई काम चल नहीं सकता, परन्तु सुरक्षा का दृष्टिकोण भी हम लोग सामने रखते हैं।

श्री श्रीम प्रकाश त्यागी: प्राय किन-किन लाइनों को परिवर्तित कर रहे हैं?

SHRI J. AHMED: Dhubri in Assam was the biggest jute exporting centre of Assam

before partition and 30 lakhs maunds of jute used to be transported from Dhubri Centre only. Now the business people are finding great difficulty to transport jute through the metre gauge due to paucity of accommodation in the Metre-gauge line. They are now carrying the jute through trucks from Dhubri to Cooch Behar to book it in the broadgauge line. May I request the Minister to give serious consideration about connecting Dhubri to Cooch Behar by a broad-gauge line immediately?

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: That is a suggestion for consideration.

SHRI J. M. BISWAS: A Committee was appointed with Mr. Chaturvedi as Chairman to convert unremunerative metre gauge and narrow gauge lines to broad gauge. We have seen the recommendation of the Committee. I want to know from the Minister about the fate of the recommendation made by that Committee to convert narrow gauge line to broad gauge line particularly with reference to Purulia Kotsella narrow-gauge line.

SHRI R. L. CHATURVEDI: The Minister has already said and explained this point very amply. For the information of the hon. Member I may just point out that Purulia Kotsella has been ordered for a survey.

श्री सीताराम केसरी: मंत्री महोदय ने मूल प्रश्न के उत्तर में जो यह कहा कि कूच बिहार बामनहाट और गितादलाह लाइन को मीटर गेज से ब्राड गेज कर देने से लाभ की दृष्टि से फायदा हो सकता है। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि इसी तरह से बरौनी से कटिहार तक जो मीटर गेज है, जिसके संबंध में सरकार ने सर्वे भी कराया है, जैसा कि भूतपूर्व रेलवे मंत्री ने आश्वासन दिया था, क्या आप उसको भी ब्राड गेज में बदलने की कोशिश करेंगे ?

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry that this question is not relevant to the main question. Very often, Ministers object on the grounds of irrelevancy. But I find on this occasion the hon. Minister is eager to answer the question. I leave it to the Member and the Minister, and they may decide between themselves.

श्री रोहन लाल चतुर्वेदी: बरौनी टु कटिहार सर्वे हो चुका है और जैसा पहले कहा जा चुका है, इसकी अभी और भी जांच हो रही है और अभी तक रिपोर्ट नहीं आई है।

MR. SPEAKER: The main question relates to a particular line, and I have been saying that the supplementary question should be relevant to the main question. But I find that the hon. Minister is all the time ready with information on all the railway lines.

श्री शिव नारायण: मैं पूर्वी उत्तर प्रदेश का रिप्रेजेंटेटिव हूँ। पिछली संसद के पांच वर्ष और इसके दो वर्ष, सात वर्ष हो चुके हैं जब से मैं इस गवर्नमेंट से डिमान्ड करता चला आया हूँ, चाहे श्री एस० के० पाटिल रेलवे मंत्री रहे हों, चाहे डा० राम सुभग सिंह रेलवे मंत्री रहे हों, चाहे श्री पुनाचा रहे हों। आज श्री नन्दा मिनिस्टर हैं। यह हमारी जेनुइन मांग रही है क्योंकि हम चीन और नेपाल के बार्डर पर बसते हैं। स्ट्रैटेजिक प्वाइंट ग्राफ व्यू से, देश की सुरक्षा के प्वाइंट ग्राफ व्यू से छोटी लाइन को बड़ी लाइन बनाया जाना चाहिए। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि यह काम कब तक पूरा हो जाएगा? मैं इसका डेफिनिट जवाब चाहता हूँ (ध्यान) यह उत्तर पूर्वी इलाके की मांग है, वर्ना 6 अप्रैल को एस० एस० पी० का जुनुस आ रहा है। मेरे प्रश्न का जवाब आना चाहिए, सरकार क्यों गूंगी बन कर बंटी है ?

MR. SPEAKER: This question is not relevant.

Indo-Ceylon Railway Co-Ordinating Committee

*693. **SHRI N. R. LASKAR:**
SHRI CHENGALRAYA NAIDU:
SHRI SAMINATHAN:
SHRI DHANDAPANI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indo-Ceylon Railway Co-ordinating Committee had a meeting in Ceylon on smoothening the working of Railway and ferry boat services between the two countries;