

डिमांड्स को नहीं उठाएंगे तो जहां आप रेलवे की प्रगति की बात कर रहे हैं, तो लोग उसको नहीं मानेंगे। मैं ऐसा मानता हूँ कि इसके साथ रेलवे की क्रेडिबिलिटी भी नहीं बढ़ेगी। जो हमारी गुजरात की थोड़ी बहुत मांगें हैं कि अहमदाबाद-उदयपुर रेलवे लाइन का ब्रोडगेज में कन्वर्जन करना चाहिए, वह भी अभी तक नहीं हुआ है, जैसे हमारे विरमगाम, अंकलेश्वर, दमन, नासिक, नरियात, तारापुर, बोटाद (BOTAD) राजकोट, मारवाड़ और पोरबंदर रेलवे पर अभी तक इस सदी में भी नैरोगेज है, और अभी तक वहां पर ब्रोडगेज नहीं हुई है, वहां पर ब्रोडगेज होनी चाहिए। यह डिमांड भी पिछले कई सालों से पड़ी हुई है। एक तरफ तो, हम विकास की बात कर रहे हैं और दूसरी तरफ हम नैरोगेज और मीटरगेज को ब्रोडगेज में अभी तक नहीं कर पाए हैं, यह बात भी ठीक नहीं है। वैसे हमारी कांडला-भटिंडा रेलवे लाइन को डबल ट्रैक में कंवर्ट करने की बात थी, वह भी नहीं हो रही है। अभी पिछले सप्ताह सूरत में जो एक्सिडेंट हुआ, उसमें 13 लोग मर गए यानी रेल से कट गए। यह जो सिग्नल और फाटक का बात है, इनकी व्यवस्था भी अभी तक ठीक नहीं है। रेलवे बजट प्रस्तुत होने के तीसरे दिन के बाद ही सूरत में यह घटना घटी है। उसमें 13 लोग रेल के नीचे कटकर मर गए हैं। इसका कारण यह है जो वहां पर पुल है, वह पुल ठीक नहीं है। इस कारण से वहां पर लोगों के आने जाने से वे रेल के नीचे कटकर मर जाते हैं। यह वहां पर तीसरा इंसिडेंट हुआ है। जो सिक्योरिटी की बात है, वह भी अभी तक पूरी नहीं हुई है। यह ठीक बात नहीं है। वैसे मैं नारायण भाई को बता रहा हूँ कि हमारे सोरठ के जूनागढ़ डिस्ट्रिक्ट में जो रेल लाइन है, वह कितने दिनों से सस्पेंड है, यानी आपने वहां पर रेल सस्पेंड कर दी है। इस रेल लाइन को फिर से चालू करने के लिए कार्यवाही करें और वंथली लुसाला, शापुर, जूनागढ़ जो रेलवे लाइन बंद हो गई है, उसे भी आप पुनः चालू कर दीजिए। जो रेलें सस्पेंड की गई हैं, उन्हें पुनः चालू करें, ताकि लोगों की सुविधा में जो तकलीफ हो रही है, उसे दूर करने का कष्ट करें और उनको सुविधा दें। ऐसा मैं मानता हूँ(समय की घंटी) जैसा अभी बताया है कि एनडीए की सरकार ने, नीतीश कुमार जी ने और बाकी सब लोगों ने जो बेस बनाए हैं जिस तरीके से विकास हो रहा है, उसका लाभ आप लोगों को मिल रहा है। इसके अलावा भी आप कुछ नई बातें कर रहे हैं। मैं यह मानता हूँ कि आप इस बजट पर पुनः विचार करेंगे और हमारी भावनाओं का आदर करेंगे।

MESSAGE FROM THE LOK SABHA

The Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2008

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I have to report to the House the following message received from the Lok Sabha, signed by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha:-

"In accordance with the provisions of rule 96 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose the Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2008, as passed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 11th March, 2008."

Sir, I lay a copy of the Bill on the Table.

The Budget (Railways) 2008-09—(Contd.)

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, at the outset, I would like to congratulate the Railway Minister and his team for having presented a commendable Budget. And, personally, on behalf of the people of Tamil Nadu, I would like to thank him for having included the proposals recommended by the hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, our leader Dr. Kalaignar.

Sir, I agree with Mr. Rahul Bajaj that the Railways are a more effective mode of transport for long distance travel and for the movement of goods. The Railways are a standing symbol of national integration connecting North-South and East-West. It connects the

industrial sector with the sources of its raw-material, and the agriculture sector with the market and the sources of its essential inputs.

The Railway Minister along with his excellent team studiously worked to bring about the turnaround in the Railways. Sir, a work of appreciation, of course, will be lauded if the outlook is unprejudiced. An indication of that is the steady rise in cash surplus of Railways from Rs. 9,000 crore in 2005 to Rs. 14,000 crore in 2006. In 2007, it was Rs. 20,000 crore. Now, in 2008, it is a record of Rs. 25,000 crore. It is the proof of the outstanding performance of the Railway Minister after the UPA, under the Prime Ministership of Dr. Manmohan Singh and stewardship of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, assumed power.

Sir, a careful, sincere, calculated, and meticulous approach is seen throughout the Budget. The Railways being the prime infrastructural sector in the country, importance has been given to its modernisation. The modernisation of the railway infrastructure has been identified as one of the main priority areas. The Railways have formulated a modernisation plan which envisages the modernisation of passenger business segment of running fast trains upto a speed of 150 kmph, increased inclusion of latest technology coaches along with safety salient features, especially with improved crash-worthiness and fire-retarding features, track modernisation and maintenance practices, signalling and telecommunication system.

(THE VICE-CHAIRMAN, SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA, in the Chair.)

Sir, one thing I must mention here is that the growth in the railway traffic is astounding. In 1950-51, the Railways transported 1,284 million passengers and 93 million tonnes of freight. In 2006-07, the Railways moved 6,219 million passengers and 278 million tonnes of freight. Of course, the percentage of freight increase is more than that of passengers. But on the other hand, the expansion of railway network is at a very slow pace. I think the Railway Ministry is aware of it. It is a fact and everyone will agree with me that 85 per cent of the existing railway network was inherited from the British. In 1950-51, the total route length was 53,596 km. In 2006-07, it was 63,327 km, which is approximately an increase of 10,000 km in 55 years. The annual average of route added after 1950 comes to only 177 km. Sir, for the incredible slow development in this Incredible India, I would like to know the reasons from the Minister. In the recent few years, there has been increasing demand for rail transportation in the existing routes, and the saturation of the existing routes results in the slow movement of passenger and freight traffic and makes it not possible to provide adequate number of trains for the passenger and freight traffic. Sir, providing additional lines by way of doubling the existing routes enables the Railways to cater to this increasing demand in passenger and freight traffic. Sir, in this context, I would like to mention that the Railway Minister should take into consideration the essential, the need and the demand for doubling the line from Villupuram to Dindigul, and I would insist on expediting the doubling process, and so also the electric traction since it reduces the dependence of largely imported diesel oil and also promotes pollution free environment. The Railways are giving importance to it. It is a thing which could be appreciated that in 1950-51, again, out of the total 53,596 kms, only a distance of 388 kms. was electrified whereas now in 2006-07, 17,786 kms., which constitutes 28 per cent of the total existing area, are electrified. Sir, in 2006-07, the target for electrification was set at 360 route kms. and the achievement was 361 route kms. Also, the achievement in the Tenth Five Year Plan was 1,810 route kms. as against the target of 1,800 route kms.

Sir, here is one thing which I would like to mention. While I am all for appreciation, there is something of a different taste, which has to be taken note of for redressal. Sir, there has

been a deceleration in the growth of acquisition of wagons by the Railways. The number of wagons has declined from 3,46,102, at the end of March, 1990-91, to 2,07,176, at the end of March, 2006. Within 15 years, one lakh wagons have declined. As on March, 2007, the Railways had 2,07,719 wagons against the target of acquiring 7,356 wagons. During 2005-06, the actual purchases were only 2,508. Sir, if that is the case, how are the Railways going to achieve the target of 10,200 in the year 2007-08 and 20,900 in the year 2008-09? And the Railways have also brought down their passenger fares. For example, in the *Rockfort Express*, from Trichy to Chennai, there are only two 3-tier AC coaches and three 2-tier AC coaches. Since the fares have come down, the number of people thronging for reservation will increase whereas the number of coaches will remain the same. I would like to know from the Minister how they are going to tackle this issue.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): Are you finishing it now?

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, I will take two minutes more. It is a very important matter. I would like to know the status and performance of the Special Railway Safety Fund (SRSF). It should be appreciated that the physical targets have been achieving during the Tenth Five Year Plan and the number of train accidents has come down to an all-time low of 195 in the year 2006-07, contrary to the comments of the Opposition parties, Sir. For instance, as for the number of train accidents per million train kilometers, which is universally accepted, the safety index is 0.23 in 2006-07, as against 3.5 in 1960. This shows the Railways sustained improvement in the safety performance. Sir, my proposal or my demand to the Railway Minister for consideration is this. From Trichy towards South, *via* Madurai and Tiruvelli, there is no day train. The people are totally deprived of train transportation during daytime.

The traffic on that line is totally free during day time and if the Railways could consider running an inter-city express starting from Tiruchi to Tirunelveli *via* Madurai and return on the same night, the patronage will be very high and the people will appreciate the Railway Ministry. I would like to insist on the Railway Minister to continue the Rockfort Express to start from Tiruchi, as earlier. Similarly, there should be a day train from Tiruchi to Bangalore *via* Vriddhachalam and Salem having link at Vriddhachalam to the trains from Pondicherry, so that people of these areas will be benefited more. After broad gauge conversion, a stretch of 187 kilometres will remain as metre gauge from Mayiladuthurai to Karaikudi *via* Tiruturaipundi. There is no indication as to when it will be taken up or when it will be completed.

As far as the employees, who constitute the majority, 1.4 lakh, in the Railways are concerned, they should be paid on a par with the employees of the public sector undertakings to tap their talent. This Railway Budget has allotted liberally for the healthcare of the employees. For your consideration, I would like to submit that the Ponmalai Railway hospital at Tiruchi, which is a renowned area and having a workshop, is totally lacking all the basic facilities, leave alone scan facilities. Heart problems could not be treated and the employees are compelled to go to private hospitals. That hospital has to be upgraded. Computer training and skills have to be imparted to the employees because they are only trained for computer operations at the passenger counters.

These are the points which I would like to present before the Railway Minister along with another point. Outsourcing has been a great failure in the Railways. I understand that a lot of areas are being taken back by the Railways. Even with the advent of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd., the catering service has not improved at the stations and on trains, except that the public has to pay more.

Sir, I appreciate and I congratulate the Railway Minister for brining it up to this level, increasing the profit and cash surplus and sanctioning so many schemes to Tamil Nadu. At the same time, I request him to consider the proposals which I have put forth on behalf of Tamil Nadu and the DMK Party. Once again, I thank you very much.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): Shri Matilal Sarkar. You have ten minutes.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR (Tripura): Thank you, Sir. First of all, I want to make one submission. I am, as of now, the only speaker from the North-East. So, I may be given sufficient time to ventilate the affairs of the North-East.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): You, at least, start your speech. If you confine to the points, there is no problem.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, at the outset, I convey the heartiest thanks to the hon. Railway Minister, Laluji, the hon. Ministers of State, Veluji and Rathwaji, on behalf of the people of Tripura for including in the Railway Budget the segment of Agartala-Sabrum railway line as a proposed line. There is also a decision to take the railway line to Agartala within 3-4 months. I further request the hon. Minister to see that this Agartala line is not kept waiting for a long time. Agartala is going to be the second capital among the eight capital cities of the North-East to have the railway line in a very short period. Sir, I request the hon. Minister, if possible, to fix a date here for the inauguration of the Agartala line. This is my first request to the Railway Minister. There is no budgetary allocation for the Agartala-Sabrum line. Though it is included in the proposals, no budgetary provision has been clearly mentioned. So, I emphasise that the work from Agartala to Sabrum should be expedited. Sir, this line between Agartala and Sabrum is important because this will open an opportunity to the North-Eastern States to use the Chittagong Sea Port in the near future. Having said this, I would like to reveal the present situation of the Railways in the North-East. As per the facts that I have, the length of the Railway line in the North-East, in totally, is 2,365 kms. Out of this in Assam lie railway lines to the extent of 2,284 kms. This shows that in all other North-Eastern States, the length of railway line is just around 100 kms. or so. In fact, the railway line has not entered Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim. These States are not having railway lines at all. It is absolutely nil, or, maybe, there is only one or two kms. of lines. So, after sixty years of independence, this is the picture. Out of these eight States, we see that as many as five States are totally devoid of railway lines. Without the expansion of railway lines in a State, no State can flourish and can progress. So, this is the picture so far as the eight States are concerned. Five States are out of the arena of railway lines. Though there are 14 projects in the pipeline in the North-Eastern States, the work is very, very slow and the Budgetary provision is also very, very meagre. For the said length of 2,365 kms., about 50 per cent is metre gauge. So, the metre gauge and broad gauge ratio is around 50 : 50. Sir, the railway lines in the North-East is suffering from two major problems. One is, the need for expansion of railway lines; we are lagging behind in this. The other is gauge conversion. The gauge conversion from Lamding to Churaibari—Churaibari is at the Assam border of Tripura—is at halt, probably, because there is dearth of security forces. Maybe, either the Forces from the Government of Assam or the RPF should be put in place so that the work on this gauge conversion does not remain halted. Sincere care should be taken to undertake these works. So far as the allocation of funds is concerned, we see that for the North-Eastern Frontier Railway, the* Budget provision has been reduced. I do not know why it is so. On the one side, the area is suffering

from dearth of railway lines, on the other side, the allocation of funds is being reduced. I can categorically give you the figures. In 2007-08, for new lines, the Budgetary provision was Rs. 373 Crores. In this year, the budgetary provision is Rs. 231.02 crores. It has been reduced. For gauge conversion, in 2007-08, Rs. 355 crores was the provision. The provision in this Budget is only Rs. 61 crores. For doubling of lines, in 2007-08, the provision was Rs. 32 crores approximately. I am giving it only in round figures. For this year, it is only Rs. 19 crores. Sir, it is very easy to understand how drastically the allocation has been reduced. All this means that the North-East will again be neglected and it will again remain neglected. I urge upon the hon. Railway Minister and the Central Government not to treat the North-East like this. It has been suffering from so many problems like the problem of terrorism, the problem of extremism, the problem excommunications and transport, the problem of lack of industrialisation, and so on. All these problems are there. Sir, literacy is very high in the North-East. But, at the same time, the young people are not getting jobs because of the fact that industrialisation has not yet started, except in certain pockets of Assam.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): How much more time do you need? I am not asking you to conclude. Just how much more time would you need?

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, I would need five minutes more.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): Only three minutes, please, because we would adjourn by six. Please conclude by six. You would not get a chance tomorrow.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, the fund allocation for the North East is not proportionate to the demands. There are some welcome steps in the Railway Budget and I appreciate those steps. Some Members of my Party have already explained them and I shall not go into details. But I would like to point to some of the problems and facts.

Sir, It is good that in today's situation of high prices, *Laluji* has prepared a Budget where passenger fares have been reduced. It is not only a welcome step but a bold step. I appreciate that the freight tariff on diesel and petrol has also been reduced. I would like to mention these among the other welcome steps. *Sushmaji* is not here; she was describing the Budget as *Indrajaal*, magic. I do not believe in magic. I am a student of Science and I believe in reality. If some concession is to be given, that must go to the *aamjanata* and if some levy is to be imposed, then that should be imposed on those who can bear it. And *Laluji* has well managed this distribution. But as regards *Tatkal*, there also *aamjanata* has been affected. What happens? The destination is the point from where one starts and where one ends the journey. The actual fare should be collected. That should be the case. I asked the hon. Minister to have a look at it. One going to Gaya has to buy a ticket for Kolkata from Delhi. That should not be the case. In the same way, I actually board the train from Kolkata, but I will have to buy the ticket from Agartala and not Kolkata. That is why I request that this fare system of *tatkal* should be looked into, Sir, as regards targets for new lines....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): Are you concluding now?

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, I am concluding. Sir, for new lines, the target is fixed at 350 kilometres; for gauge conversion, it is 2150 kilometres and for doubling, it is 1000 kilometres. But, if we look at the funds provided, we will find that the funds are very insignificant, it is not proportionate to the necessity. I request the hon. Railway Minister to take care of all these things

Sir, the last point that I would like to highlight is the Private-Public Partnership, PPP. Sir, on the previous occasion, I said that this is a very nice way to induce privatisation. What has happened here is this. The works of container trains are vesting on private parties. The privatisation is going on there. The quota for privatisation has been increased. So, I would like to emphasise that by way of this, Laluji is taking this process towards privatisation. We have strong objection to it. We want that Laluji should stop there. Laluji should not proceed further.

Sir, as far as the vacancies are concerned, there are 1.5 lakh vacancies in the Railways. There is no provision in the Budget to fill up these vacant posts. The unemployed youths are waiting. They aspire for some hopeful message from Laluji that all these vacant posts should be filled in. I demand from here that all the vacant posts should be filled in; none of the vacant posts should be allowed to lapse. The budgetary provision should be made for that. Thank you, Sir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): The House is adjourned till 11.00 a.m. on 12th March, 2008.

The House then adjourned at three minutes past six of the clock till eleven of the clock on Wednesday, the 12th March, 2008.