

SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP: I move:

"That the Bill be passed."

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE SEAMEN'S PROVIDENT FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1995

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): We are now taking up the Seamen's Provident Fund (Amendment) Bill, 1995.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Sir, there is a supplementary list of business which says that Shri Ram Vilas Paswan will make a statement.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): The Minister came here and requested time till 4.15 p.m.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: But at 4 o'clock we have a Short Duration Discussion.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): The Minister is in the Lok Sabha now. He came here and requested. He is on his legs there.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, the point is very simple. There are two Ministers. One is the Cabinet Minister and the other is the Minister of State. The Minister of State is here.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): The Railway Minister himself is taking interest to make the statement. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: What about the protocol? (*Interruptions*)

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): We can take up protocol. He himself is taking interest. He himself wants to make the statement.

THE LEADER OF OPPOSITION (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): Why did he not foresee all the difficulties? This is very bad. (*Interruptions*) It is not possible at 4.15 p.m. We are going to have a Short-Duration Discussion.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL (Rajasthan): It is already listed in the supplementary business. It cannot disturb the original list of business.

SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT: He himself plans! (*Interruptions*)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (Delhi): Sir, it is a very important Short Duration Discussion. I would be speaking at the right time. My speech should not be stopped in the midst. If the statement is made, it is difficult. Let it be at 6 o'clock. (*Interruptions*)

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): Immediately after his work is over in Lok Sabha he would come here. That is what he said.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: 4 o'clock business cannot be changed.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Already we have selected the agenda. Just in order to make it convenient for the Minister; please do not change it. Let us have the discussion at 4 o'clock and the Minister can make his statement after that.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): We will request him. We will put it before the House adjourns for the day. We are now taking up the Seamen's Provident Fund (Amendment) Bill.

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): Sir, I move:

"That the Bill to amend the Seamen's Provident Fund Act, 1966, be taken into consideration."

With your permission, I would like to say a few words while moving the Seamen's Provident Fund (Amendment) Bill, 1996 for consideration and approval. The Seamen's Provident Fund Act, 1966 was enacted by the Parliament to provide for the institution of a Provident Fund for seamen. In the process of implementing the provisions of the Act, certain practical difficulties have been experienced from time to time. For

example, only one bank has been nominated for operation of accounts of the organisation under Section 4; a maximum monthly salary of not less than Rs. 600/- has been indicated for officers in Section 7; a fixed rate of contribution has been indicated in Section 8; etc. Besides, the Merchant Navy Officers Association has been demanding that they should also be included within the purview of this Act so that the Provident Fund Scheme is also applicable to them. In view of this, the amendments have been proposed as per the Bill.

The question was proposed.

SHRI VA'ALAR RAVI (Kerala): Sir, I support this Bill even though it is very delayed. Sir, it is a very delayed enactment because the employees in all other private organisations are getting a higher rate of interest. Their salary is also not limited. Everybody can be covered by the Provident Fund Scheme and the entire salary is being taken into account. Sir, this rate of interest was increased many years ago. Although it is late, I welcome the increase in the rate of interest from eight per cent to ten per cent. Sir, the limit of Rs. 600/- has also been taken away. It is also a welcome step. But I wonder whether it will be with retrospective effect because I could not see anything here in this regard. These people might have lost money because earlier the rate of interest was eight per cent and now it is proposed to be ten per cent. They have lost because of this restriction of Rs. 600/- as the highest salary. So, all these things should be taken into account. I would like know whether these amendments would be with retrospective effect. This is one thing. Otherwise, there is nothing to be criticised or talked about in this Bill.

Sir, another thing that I want to bring to the notice of this House is that 'seamen' is an area where the employment potential is very very high. Sir, the men in this area are very few; they are not available. Sir, the reason is that there is a deliberate attempt by

certain vested interests not to increase the training centres or the number of people to be trained in this particular area. Sir, in Cochin a Certificate Course or something like that is going on for seamen. But, there only ten people are selected for the training.

I wonder why such an area where there is a great potential of employment is being ignored. Sir, this Certificate Course is not given properly because the number of people to be admitted is restricted. Only a limited number of people are admitted and as soon as they complete their training, they are absorbed by the shipping companies. I would like to know from the Minister whether he would look into this aspect and ensure that this Certificate course training is given to more men, whether it is in Bombay, Cochin or Madras. Of course, Mr. Venkatraman comes from Madras as you do, Sir, and I come from Cochin. There are many centres which issue certificate/course training to seamen. I think the Minister must look into this aspect of providing employment to the people in this area.

Sir, the second aspect is that the shipping industry is sick. Shipping industry is an area in which seamen get employment. Sir, the fate of our shipping industry is that it is not in a mood to expand itself. Of course, private shipping companies are coming up, but they find it difficult to expand. I do not want to go into the details of what is happening.

Hon. Minister, I hope you are hearing...(interruptions)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): Order, please.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: One more important matter I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister. Whenever a new shipping company wants to acquire more ships or wants to expand its fleet, the Shipping Corporation stands in the way. They never operate. They never acquire more ships. And they never give order to the Cochin Shipyard

to build new ships. No. They never do that. But, at the same time, they never allow others to come in. When Indian shipping companies want to expand or want to acquire more ships, the Shipping Corporation comes in their way. The Indian ship and cargo percentage is less than 30% or 40% and the rest is carried by the international shipping companies. Sir, especially, in the Gulf countries and on the other side of the Bay of Bengal there is a great potential and scope for the Indian shipping companies to expand and in a way, it can give employment to seamen. I am saying this because this concerns seamen. Seamen can be employed if our shipping companies expand their fleet and acquire more ships. I want the hon. Minister to look into the aspect where the Shipping Corporation of India is raising objections to every company which wants to acquire a ship. They say that you have to operate on this particular line. Firstly, I request the hon. Minister for retrospective effect of the legislation giving the benefit lost by the seamen who are members of the Provident Fund. Secondly, with the help of certification course we can increase the employment potential. We can increase the number of people to be taken in for training under certification course. This is a very important matter because the employment potential is very high. Thirdly, the attitude of the Shipping Corporation of India, even though it is in the public sector, is not satisfactory. The Corporation is not expanding. They are not taking new routes. They are not acquiring ships as they expected. My question is, while not expanding themselves, why do they object to the Indian companies expanding or to new companies coming in for cargo navigation to Gulf countries or to other areas of the world. So, the Shipping Corporation of India shall not be an impediment for expansion of the shipping industry in India. I wish the hon. Minister looks into this important aspect of his Ministry and help the

expansion of shipping industry in this country. With these words, I support the Bill.

SHRI JIBON ROY (West Bengal): Sir, I welcome the Bill and I support the comments made by the hon. Member, Shri Ravi. Sir, more training centres have to be opened and more training is required for our seamen because the potentiality of service is there. I wish to make a suggestion, among the seamen, the average service, if the entire service period is taken together, is around three or four months in a year. Therefore, it is necessary that the rate of Contributory Provident Fund should be more than what is applicable to other industrial workers. Therefore, I request the hon. Minister to consider whether that rate—8 1/3—could be enhanced. Sir, one more clarification that I seek from the hon. Minister is, according to the original Act the operation is to be made only through the State Bank. But, in the proposed amendment, it is mentioned any 'scheduled' or 'approved' bank. Will the hon. Minister assure us that 'approved bank' means only 'nationalised bank' and not private or other banks. These are the few suggestions I wanted to make. With this, I welcome the Bill.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: Mr. Vice-Chairman. Sir, in regard to the points raised by learned Member, Shri Vayalar Ravi, and hon. Member, Shri Jibon roy, I would take them into consideration. If necessary, I will bring forward another amendment Bill.

So far as the present amending Bill is concerned, it is compact. I would request the House to pass the Bill.
(Interruptions)

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Mr. Minister, I raised two important points.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: I have noted it. I said that if necessary, I will bring forward another amendment Bill.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Would you look into it? Would you consider it?

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: I will consider it.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Fine.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): Now, the question is:

"That the Bill to amend the Seamen's Provident Fund Act, 1996, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): We shall now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Clauses 2 to 7 were added to the Bill.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): We take up Clause 1. There is one amendment, amendment No. 2, by the hon. Minister.

Clause 1—Short title and commencement

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: Sir, I beg to move:

"That at page 1, line 4, for the figure '1995', the '1996' be substituted."

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

Clause 1, as amended, was added to the Bill.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): We now take up the Enacting Formula. There is one amendment, amendment No. 1, by the hon. Minister.

Enacting Formula

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: Sir, I beg to move:

"That at page 1, line 1, for the word 'Forty-sixth', the word 'Forty-seventh' be substituted."

The question was put and the motion was adopted

The Enacting Formula, as amended, was added to the Bill.

The Title was added to the Bill.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: Sir, I move:

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

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN): The hon. Minister of Railways, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, wants to make a suo motu statement. He is here. Shall we ask him to make the statement?...He can. Please distribute copies of the statement.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Blast in 1077 UP Jhelum Express at Ambala contonment Railway Station, at 2.15 A.M. on the 2nd December, 1996

रेल मंत्री (श्री राम विलास पासवान): सिकन्दर बख्त जी, रिवाइण्ड स्टेटमेंट हमने बनाया है। उसकी अंग्रेजी की कपियाँ तैयार हैं, हिन्दी की कपियाँ एक-दो मिनट में सब सदस्यों को मिल जायेगी। यदि आपकी आज्ञा हो तो हिन्दी में पहुँचें। नहीं तो अभी केवल यह अंग्रेजी में उपलब्ध है।

श्री सलीम अग्रवाल: आपने तैयार किया होता तो हिन्दी में होता। अफसर ने तैयार किया है तो अंग्रेजी में है।

श्री राम विलास पासवान: मैंने हिन्दी में देखा था। उसको ठीक किया, उसमें ही संशोधन किया गया है। इसी के कारण थोड़ा सा विलम्ब हुआ।

मैं अत्यंत दुःख के साथ सदन को एक दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण घटना की सूचना दे रहा हूँ जो 2.12.96 को लगभग 02.20 बजे अम्बाला छावनी रेलवे स्टेशन पर जम्मू जाने वाली झेलम एक्सप्रेस (गाड़ी सं० 1077 अप) के एक शयनयान में हुए विस्फोट के संबंध में है।

गाड़ी सं० 1077 अप झेलम एक्सप्रेस 01.12.96 को नई दिल्ली रेलवे स्टेशन से 21.50 बजे चली और 02.12.96 को लगभग 1.55 बजे अंबाला छावनी रेलवे स्टेशन पर पहुँची। जब यह गाड़ी अंबाला छावनी स्टेशन के प्लेटफार्म नं० 6 से चलने वाली थी, तब इसके शयनयान सं० सी०आर 5370 (एस-4) में विस्फोट हुआ।

नवीनतम रिपोर्टों के अनुसार, इस घटना में 10 यात्रियों की मृत्यु हुई और 29 व्यक्ति घायल हुए हैं जिन्हें अंबाला के विभिन्न अस्पतालों में अर्थात् सिविल अस्पताल, सैनिक अस्पताल और रेलवे अस्पताल तथा पी०जी०आई० चंडीगढ़ में भर्ती कराया गया है। 29 घायलों में से 12 को प्राथमिक उपचार के बाद छुट्टी दे दी गई है।