

Need to expedite the execution of gauge conversion work in Tamil Nadu and introduction of Rajdhani Express between Delhi and Madras

SHRI S. K. T. RAMACHANDRAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Vice-Chairman, through this Special Mention I would like to insist on the three persistently consistent demands of not only mine but of all the Members of Parliament from Tamil Nadu in both Houses.

My first demand to the Government is the immediate implementation of the gauge conversion project in Tamil Nadu from Madras to Dindigal via Virudhachalam and Trichy. The conversion of this 400 K.M. metre gauge line into broad gauge line should be given to priority by the Government as this trunk line is the heart-line in the network of Railways in Tamil Nadu. If and only if this gauge conversion is completed most of the districts in Tamil Nadu and most of the industrial and trade centres in Tamil Nadu would have quick access to the rest of the country through the capital, Madras. Besides this the project is vitally essential for the economic and trade growth of Tamil Nadu. The Government, which is having an ambitious programme for the conversion of 6000 K.M. of metre gauge into broad gauge in the country in the Eighth Five Year Plan, I hope, will give special attention to this important 400 K.M. project. To my surprise, though in the Budget speech the Railway Minister made a mention of inclusion of this project in the Eighth Five Year Plan, the Railway Minister has allocated only Rs. 2 crores for this project in the current year. The total outlay for the Trichy-Dindigal 93 K.M. segment of this project alone is Rs. 47 crores. At this rate, I fear, the implementation of this project moving at snail's pace, will not be completed during the Eighth Five Year Plan. Hence I request the Government to revise the allocation accordingly and to speed up execu-

tion of works and see that the project is completed within the Eighth Five Year Plan period.

The next demand is that till this project of conversion of metre gauge into broad gauge from Madras to Dindigal via Virudhachalam and Trichy is completed and opened for traffic, the existing Madurai-Trichy metre gauge should be retained along with the proposed parallel broad gauge line. If the metre gauge in the sector is not retained the people of southern districts in Tamil Nadu will be put to untold hardships. Cutting across party lines all Members from Tamil Nadu of this House and the other House of the Parliament have so many times raised their voices to emphasise the genuineness of this demand.

The last but not the least demand is the introduction of a new Rajdhani Express from Delhi to Madras. At present Rajdhani Expresses are operated from Delhi to Bombay and Calcutta. So, logically the next order of priority in linking Delhi to any other city in the country by Rajdhani Express should go to Madras. Any violation of this order of sequence in fixing up priority is understandable and condemnable. Hence, I would like to request the Government that the next immediate Rajdhani Express which is likely to be introduced soon in the country should be between Delhi and Madras.

I am confident that the Railway Ministry will take note of this and render justice. Thank you.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by Mr. Ramachandran.

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI (Tamil Nadu): I associate myself with what Mr. Ramachandran has said. The prestige of Tamil Nadu is involved in the matter of introduction of Rajdhani Express. So, my humble submission is that it should come to Madras.