

RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 19th November, 1986/28
Kartika, 1908 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock. Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Local trains from and to Guwahati

*221. SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRA-VARTY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of local trains running from and to Guwahati within a distance of 300 kilometre;

(b) whether it is a fact that the number of local trains from Guwahati is insufficient to cope with passengers' demand; and

(c) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to augment the running of local trains from and to Guwahati?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) and (b) Five pairs of shuttle trains run between Narangi/Guwahati and Pandu. From Guwahati, there are passenger trains to Dhubri and Lumding, and two Express trains to Silchar. Besides the above, 9 pairs of long distance trains on the North Bank, and 3 pairs of long distance trains on the South bank serve the passengers to and from Guwahati. These services adequately meet the traffic requirements.

(c) No, Sir.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRA-VARTY: Mr. Chairman, it is known to the hon. Railway Minister that some of the passenger trains in Assam run 1565 RS—1

below 5 kilometres per hour. As there is no marked improvement in the running condition of the passenger trains in Assam, I want to know whether the hon. Minister is thinking of extending broad-gauge line up to Tinsukhia and Silchar within the next financial year. Moreover, there is only one passenger train in between thickly populated 400 kilometres long Guwahati-Dubri line and that train too runs during night hours. Why is 9 UP Arunachal Express detained daily for 12 hours at Rangia Junction to the great inconvenience of the passengers?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Sir, she has asked a number of questions. It is not an omnibus train. But certainly it is an omnibus question. She has asked two or three separate supplementaries. You are very liberal when it comes to questions about the Railways.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know you can answer them.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRA-VARTY: Sir, the hon. Minister knows that all the trains in Assam run at a speed of 5 kilometres per hour. Moreover, those trains are detained. That is why I am asking the question. Has he any information?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: The trains at present serving the Guwahati area are fairly adequate for local requirements. As the hon. Member must be knowing Guwahati area is served by 10 long distance trains on the North bank and 6 long distance trains on the South bank. Apart from this, five pairs of shuttle trains are there every day. In addition to this, there is also another train which merges with the Barak Valley Express on the Lumding-Guwahati section. Looking at the occupancy, these are fairly adequate. I would like to assure the hon. Member that whenever we feel that the services are inadequate, we certainly step up the trains. On this occasion, I would like to say that the Guwahati Dhubri passenger train has an

occupancy of 160 per cent which really seemed a bit unreasonable. I would like to inform the hon. Member that this train was run with 10 coaches. I have ordered that five more coaches should be attached to this train and it will become a 15-coach train which will reduce the occupancy percentage considerably.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: The passenger trains that run in Assam are not safe. For example, it is known to the hon. Minister that there was a tragic railway accident on the 19th of September at an unmanned level crossing in between Harmoti and Tipling in Lakhimpur District where 32 passengers were knocked dead and 71 passengers were injured. This happened because there is no railway gate at that level crossing. There are many more unguarded level crossings in Assam. Therefore, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether he is thinking of any safety measures for the passengers who are travelling in Assam trains.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Not only in Assam in particular, but safety measures as such are under or constant review and we are taking new steps. As proposals come to us and as innovations take place, we are taking certain steps to keep on improving the safety aspect.

SHRI JERLIE E. TARIANG: Sir, the timing of the passenger trains from Guwahati is a very important factor to the passengers because of the fact that most of the States around Assam are to depend for their railway journey from Guwahati and arriving at Guwahati. Sir, about the long-distance train, specially for passengers from Delhi to Guwahati, we are grateful to the Government that they have introduced one superfast train. But the timing is such that it is meant only for the people of Guwahati although majority of the passengers are from around Guwahati, either from many parts of Assam or from different States around Assam. The thing is

such that it has to leave early in the morning at 6 a.m. It means that the people who are around Guwahati have to travel in the night to catch the train. We would like to know from the Government whether they would consider changing the time so that the train leaves Guwahati in the evening and reaches Guwahati in the morning. That will be more convenient for all the passengers.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Sir, the timings have been set keeping in mind the overall interest of the entire area. Each particular area would obviously want different things. But keeping the interests of everyone in mind, we have tried to adjust the timings. But the suggestions of the hon. Member are always welcome and they will be kept in mind.

SHRI NAGEN SAIKIA: Sir, the demand to divert the railway lines from the heart of the Guwahati city is being made many times to the hon. Minister. I want to know whether the Government would take necessary steps to divert the same and save the city and thereby make sufficient room for the local trains.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Sir, I was just going to say that the question is not relevant to this particular question...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I give some latitude to Assam.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Sir, the hon. Member has very dexterously brought in the local train issue. There are certain proposals that we have received about moving the station out of Guwahati. But it does present various other problems. So, the issue has to be examined in its entirety, and we have to examine all the ramifications that would occur due to the shifting of that station. And that is under process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next Question. Question No. 222.