

sideration this point. And the Chief Minister who met me personally told me that he is still considering the proposal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The other aspect that was discussed at the Conference was the allotment of permits for stage carriage for the State of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and the Union Territory of Pondicherry. I want to know, how many routes have been allotted for each State?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Routes are a State subject. Normally States deal with it. For the information of the hon. Member, I have said in my last Question day that a group of Ministers met last month and they have recommended that specially the tourists permit buses which were not having national permits that quota restriction has been removed. Now all the States will have a free-hand to issue the national permits for the tourist buses also.

SHRI BASUDEB MOHAPATRA: Sir, whether it is a fact that in the Southern Regional Transport Ministers Conference a proposal was initiated for amalgamation of Orissa Road Transport Company with the Orissa State Road Transport Corporation? In this regard I may also draw the attention of the hon. Minister that the Government of Orissa has also initiated the proposal for amalgamation of the ORT Company with the Corporation. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, whether the amalgamation of transport company with the corporation is feasible? If not feasible, the company which is incurring heavy losses has to be wind up. Whether the Central Government has issued any instructions to the State Government in this regard?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Sir, we have only received the recommendations after the discussion of the Southern Regional Transport Ministers Conference. But actually they have not sent to us word by word discussion. They have sent us the

recommendations, but this was not one of the subjects they have discussed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next Question No. 284, Mr. Aladi Aruna.

Uneconomic Railway lines

*294. **SHRI ALADI ARUNA alias V. ARUNACHALAM:**

Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to pursue the policy of closure of uneconomic Railway Lines under the 15-year plan; and

(b) if so, what are the lines considered to be uneconomical?

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT (SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI): (a) Yes, Sir. The policy is to consider closure of those uneconomic branch lines where adequate alternative mean of transport exist.

(b) Those branch lines whose need earnings are not sufficient to meet the prescribed dividend liability on the capital investment are treated as uneconomic.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA alias V. ARUNACHALAM: Sir, the Indian Railways is one of the largest national undertakings with an investment of more than Rs. 8,882 crores and a route of 61,380 kms. Sir, its net revenue income during the last year is Rs. 6,005 crores. Despite these facts, our Government is always thinking of closure of certain narrow gauge lines saying that they are unremunerative. At the same time, it has not taken any steps to make those lines viable and more than that, the Railway Board is always pressurizing the State Governments for the reimbursement of losses sustained by the Railways for operating these lines but the State Governments are refusing to meet the reimbursement losses. Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has dropped the idea of asking the State

Governments to meet these losses because you are not sharing any profit which you get from other lines.

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Sir, it is not only the Railway Ministry who wants to close down these uneconomical lines because these uneconomical lines are giving a loss of Rs. 67.40 crores to us. So many Committees have considered this policy of ours to close down these uneconomical lines. The Estimates Committee considered it in 1967-68, the Committee of Transport Policy and Coordination in 1966, the Public Accounts Committee in 1968-69, the Uneconomic Branch Lines Committee in 1969, the Railway Convention Committee in 1973, the Committee on Social Burdens in 1979, the Railway Tariff Inquiry Committee in 1980 and the National Transport Policy Committee in 1980. It was the decision of all these Committees that we should close down these uneconomical lines but as you know, the State Governments are not agreeing to it and one of the Committees has suggested that we can ask the State Governments and if they agree to share the loss and if they can share our burden, we can have rethinking to continue these lines but it is a problem for the Railway Ministry that Rs. 67 crores is the loss because of these uneconomical lines.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA alias V. ARUNACHALAM: Sir, I agree with the hon. Minister that various Committees have preferred for the closure of those lines but at the same time, the Railway Convention Committee which examined the Track Expansion Programme of the Railways has clearly stated that there is a reluctance on the part of the State Governments for meeting the losses. So, the Committee has recommended to the Railway Board that the issue should be re-examined with a view to see whether these lines could be made viable by improving the speed or by changing their timings of the trains to suit the convenience of the travelling public or by providing more passenger faci-

lities. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether these measures have been taken to make those lines viable, No. 1. No. 2. to meet the reimbursement losses, the Railway Ministry is asking for 50 per cent from the State Governments. Under what rule or under what morality you are asking for that? You are not at all paying the profit to them. I would like to say that there are certain divisions which are running in losses for the past ten years. I am saying this because Northern Lines, North Eastern Lines, North East Frontiers, these divisions have been running in losses since 1975. Their percentage is increasing. Are you asking for reimbursement of losses from the State Governments which are located in that area? Have you taken any measures to make those lines viable? Will you keep the lines or will you operate these lines in the public interest?

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Sir, the Department of Railway has accepted the recommendations of the Railway Reforms Committee and we have retained 74 uneconomical branch lines on account of these being important from various points of view. But it is not our suggestion. It is the suggestion of the Railway Convention Committee, not of the Railways. So we are ready, the Railway Ministry is ready to give them one-time help if they want to have a road or if they want to buy some vehicles. We are ready to give them some help. This is a burden on the Railway Ministry. So I think the House will consider this point also.

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: What about improvement in the quality of the services?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. R. T. Gopalan.

SHRI R. T. GOPALAN: Hon. Chairman, Sir, there is a report that there is a proposal to close down the Bodinaikanur-Madurai line in Tamil Nadu. This Bodinaikanur-Madurai

railway line is connecting thousands of villages and small business people will be much affected if it is closed down. Will the Government take steps to reconsider the issue?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you information on this? Otherwise you can ask for notice.

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: I think for this particular railway line, I cannot give you the details.

SHRI K. MOHANAN: The question itself is about uneconomic railway lines. Why is the Minister not having the details with her?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are so many lines. You cannot ask for information about each one of them. This is a general question.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Most of the lines are uneconomic.

SHRI K. MOHANAN: Sir, if it is the policy of the Government to close down all uneconomic lines, I think the entire Indian railway system is uneconomic. So we have to close it down. But it is a public utility service. On that basis, I would like to ask the Minister whether there is any proposal on the part of the Government to make these uneconomic lines viable and remunerative. For example, in the southern region, in my States, from Sitoranur to Nilambur there is a narrow gauge line. It was constructed in the British days, and at that time it was mainly intended to take the forest produce from the hill areas there. But now there is no hill or forest. It is a thickly populated area. And now they are running only a single service per day. How can you make it a viable and remunerative line? Generally I would like to know from the Minister in such cases the Railways would make any survey to make such lines viable and remunerative.

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Sir, it is a good suggestion. About the lines which are uneconomic, I can

discuss with the Members of that area. They can help us by giving suggestions as to how to make them viable. Otherwise it is very difficult. We are not happy to close down these lines. But we cannot do anything because it is giving us so much loss. These are one-end branch lines. We have to close them down because we cannot go on like this. Every year the burden of the loss is there. So if Members of Parliament could suggest something to make them viable, it will be a very good thing for us.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Sir, the maintenance of these uneconomic branch lines is one of the social burdens borne by the Railways for a long time. Several times it has been suggested that these lines should be closed down. But obviously no State Government would agree to the unpopular decision of closing down a public service. So naturally resistance would be there. But because these lines are uneconomic and not viable, the Railways are not improving the services. Bad coaches are put there. The stations are very bad, and only ticketless passengers are using these services. There are good road services, parallel road services. I want the hon. Minister to make a distinction. Wherever there are no alternative transport services like a good bus service, these lines have to be maintained. Where there are parallel road services, which are being well patronised, which are faster than the railway service, it is better to consult the State Governments and the passenger associations also and then take a decision either to close down the line or improve it by putting good coaches, dieselising the service, etc., so that it can be made viable. Will you kindly make another attempt to discuss it with the State Governments and come to a decision?

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: I have already said that this is a good suggestion. We will discuss this matter with the State Governments.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN: May I know from the hon. Minister the number

of lines in Tamil Nadu which the hon. Minister is proposing to close and, if possible, their names?

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:

There are two lines. One is from Peralam to Karaikal. It is metre gauge and 24 kilometres long. It is in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. The loss is 9.08 lakhs. The other one is Mayuram-Tarangambadis. It is 30 kilometres long in Tamil Nadu. It is giving us a loss of 10.34 lakhs.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : श्रीमन्, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि बिहार में कौन-सी अनइकानामिक लाइन्स हैं। अभी तक मंत्री महोदय ने कहा है कि एकमात्र कारण है अनइकानामिक होना, लेकिन कुछ ऐसे स्ट्रेटेजिक क्षेत्र होंगे जहाँ अनइकानामिक होने पर भी रेलवे लाइन को चालू रखना होगा क्योंकि उसका सम्बन्ध देश की सुरक्षा से होगा। दूसरी बात यह है कि क्या सरकार ने इस पहलू पर विचार किया है कि रेलवे की अपनी इनएफीशिएन्सी के चलते वह लाइन अनइकानामिक हो रही है क्योंकि हमारे राज्य में राजधानी पटना को उत्तर बिहार से किसी भी ट्रेन से 24 घंटे से कम में नहीं पहुँच सकते। अगर इस से चलें तो 6 घंटे में आ सकते हैं। वहाँ आपकी लाइन अनइकानामिक हो ही जायगी।

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is about uneconomic lines and not about North-Bihar railways.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: That is why I said that the only consideration should not be 'uneconomical'. The strategic areas should be taken separately and the inefficiency of the railways must be considered. If the inefficiency of the Railways is proved, then you should reconsider that area. I have already asked about Bihar.

श्रीमती मोहसिना किदवाई : अध्यक्ष जी, बिहार की भी दो-तीन लाइन्स हैं जो अनइकानामिक हैं। बख्तियारपुर-राजगीर तो हट गई है। पूरी लिस्ट मेरे पास है। कटिहार मनियार घाट है, और भी एक-

आध है। माननीय सदस्य कह रहे हैं वही बात मैंने कही। 74 लाइन रोक दी हैं, 200 थीं, सबको नहीं रोक सकते। आप लोगों की मदद हो.....

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : पहले मदद ले लीजिए बात में राकिए।

श्रीमती मोहसिना किदवाई : मैं यह कह रही थी कि यह समस्या हम लोग समझते हैं। जहाँ रेलवे की इनएफीशिएन्सी है वह मैं दूर करूँगी। जहाँ पब्लिक के तुमाइन्टों की मदद की जरूरत है वह वे दें तो मिल कर कुछ सकेंगे तो करेंगे।

Ban on the use of Fluoride in the manufacture of Toothpaste

*285. **SHRI J. P. GOYAL:** Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the use of fluoride in the toothpaste causes dental fluorosis—a condition which has neither treatment nor cure; if so, the reaction of Government in regard thereto;

(b) whether Government are aware of the research done in this regard at the Fluoride and Fluorosis Research Laboratories in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi;

(c) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(d) whether it is proposed to ban the use of fluoride in toothpaste, and if so, what are the details in this regard and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE): (a) No, Sir. Application of fluoride toothpaste on teeth surface as such does not cause Dental fluorosis.

(b) and (c) According to surveys and research conducted at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Dental and Skeletal fluorosis is caused by consuming