

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Even at present the genuine second-class passengers will not get the reservation. And if this system is followed, these travel agents will book a number of tickets and genuine passengers will not get tickets at all. The Supreme Court has directed that suitable agency should be created to cater to the needs of the second class passengers. I would like to know whether the Railway Administration will think over having more railway offices to issue tickets to second-class passengers so that these agents, who buy the tickets in bulk, are not able to sell the tickets in blackmarket. If that is done, genuine passengers will be able to get tickets.

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: They are not permitted to purchase tickets in bulk. There are certain rules. One employee of the agents who is authorised, will stand in the queue just like other passengers and on his turn can purchase maximum four tickets at a time. So, it is not a question that he will purchase in bulk and the passengers will be deprived of tickets. It is only for the benefit of those passengers who have no time to come to the railway counter and stand in the queues. They go to the agents and purchase their tickets through them on payment of service charge and proper authorisation.

SHRI DHARAM CHANDER PRASHANT: We come across unauthorised Agencies and unauthorised individuals at the Railway Station. Therefore, I want to know who are the authorised agencies? And what is their number?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member wants to know: How many authorised agencies have you got?

SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Sir, after formulation of this scheme we have given 102 licences and many applications are under consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, next Question No. 283.

Southern Regional Conference of Transport Ministers held at Bangalore.

*283 SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state;

(a) whether it is a fact that in the Southern Regional Transport Ministers Conference held at Bangalore, the need to nationalize the stage carriers and to form a Transport Corporation in the Union Territory of Pondicherry was emphasised; and

(b) if so, what action Government have taken to implement the decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT):

(a) and (b) The question of setting up of State Road Transport Corporation under the Road Transport Corporations Act, 1950 and nationalization of routes through appropriate schemes under Chapter IV A of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1939 are matters within the competence of concerned State Governments. Union Territory Administration who have to take a view after considering such proposals in all its aspects.

The suggestions with regard to these matters as received by the Central Government were also forwarded to Pondicherry Administration. Pondicherry Administration have intimated that, they have as yet not taken a final decision in the matter,

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, my first question very specific. Whether the Southern Regional Transport Ministers Conference held at Bangalore emphasised the need for nationalisation of bus transport in Pondicherry? Whether the Central Government is aware of this fact? But the hon. Minister has stated that it is a State subject. My humble submission is that Pondicherry being a Union Territory, the hon Minister has to reply about this particular fact.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in the Southern Regional Transport Ministers Conference this point was raised. But it was not discussed at length. No decision was taken on their recommendations. We have also asked the Union Territory administration to take into con-

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 element 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 wound 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 proposes 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 means of transport exist.

(b) Those branch lines whose 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