

**Guarding of unmanned railway level crossings by private firms**

\*285. SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is exploring the possibilities of awarding the work of guarding the unmanned level crossings to private firms;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to ensure that all 17,000 unmanned level crossings are manned in the next five years to reduce the number of accidents at railway crossings?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

***Statement***

(a) to (c) Railways has announced in the Budget 2010-11 that all unmanned level crossings shall be eliminated in next five years, through manning of unmanned level crossing gates qualifying as per relaxed criteria, provision of Road Under Bridges (RUBs) and Limited Height Subways, merger of traffic to nearby LCs, where feasible and closing of such unmanned level crossings, which have negligible road traffic. Accordingly, Railways has sanctioned manning of about 4,000 unmanned gates during the years 2009-10 and 2010-11, to accelerate works of manning. Recently, financial powers have been delegated to the General Managers to sanction subways costing up to Rs. 2.5 crore in lieu of unmanned level crossings. Under the Railway scheme, Hon'ble Members of Parliament can also sponsor conversion of unmanned level crossing to manned level crossing under the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, there are 17,000 unmanned level crossings in the country. It is the most dangerous thing. Several accidents are taking place at unmanned level crossings. In the reply, the Minister says, "Railways has announced in the Budget 2010-11 that all unmanned level crossings shall be eliminated in next five years". The Railways has sanctioned manning of 4,000 unmanned gates in 2009-10 and 2010-11. It is very small. I would like to know from the hon. Minister

how they are going to eliminate 17,000 unmanned level crossings in these five years. If they plan to eliminate 4,000 unmanned gates in two years, how will they eliminate 17,000 in five years?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, we have planned for 2010-11 when 4,000 unmanned gates would be converted into manned. This is a continuous process. We hope to complete it in time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Sir, we need your protection. When they are planning to man 4,000 unmanned gates in two years, how will they complete 17,000 in five years? Please tell us. ...*(Interruptions)*...

**श्री आर.सी. सिंह :** सर, उन्होंने पूछा कि टोटल नम्बर कितना है? ...*(व्यवधान)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that the question in Arithmetic in a school?

**श्री राजीव प्रताप रूडी :** सर, मैं निरन्तर इस सदन में सवाल उठा रहा हूँ और प्रत्येक बार जब मैं सवाल उठाता हूँ, तो इस सरकार की इस मंशा को जाहिर करने का प्रयास करता हूँ कि सवाल कुछ किए जाते हैं और जवाब हमेशा इसके विपरीत आता है। सर, इस पूरे सवाल को आप स्वयं पढ़ कर देखो इसमें पूछा गया है, "Possibilities of awarding the work of guarding the unmanned level crossings to private firms". सर, आप स्वयं इस सवाल के जवाब से पढ़ कर बता दें कि इस सवाल का जवाब कहाँ है। Where is it mentioned anywhere in the answer that it is going to be awarded to the private firms or it is not going to be awarded to the private firms? I would like the hon. Minister to answer this question. I would like every Member in the House to read this answer and find out the answer of this question which has been raised. For the last three times, I have been raising these questions relating to the answers and every time there is a hoodwinking. Today, I would again request the Minister to please answer whether in your written reply you have answered this or not. If you are not answering here, it is okay. But when you come back with a written reply, do you answer the specific questions? Here it has been asked, "Whether these unmanned crossings are to be privatized or not?", Is your answer to this question there in the reply or not?

Sir, you have to see this answer. This has happened a number of times in this House. I would request every Member to read this answer and see whether the question has been answered or not.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: As regards the answer given to question (a) to (c), if you take the answer in its entirety, any hon. Member will be able to. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: I understand both English and Hindi. You read the answer. It says, "...through manning of unmanned level cross gates qualifying as per relaxed criteria." Now, what are these relaxed criteria? Is it going to be privatized or not?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: My hon. friend may kindly listen to me. I do admit that you have a right to put questions to me; you have a right to challenge me. I do not deny it. But I may be given the time to answer. What we have mentioned here, in the last part of the answer, we have said, "Under the Railway Scheme, the hon. Members of Parliament can also sponsor conversion of unmanned level crossing to manned level crossing under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS). ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Sir, you read the answer. I have been pointing it out every time in this House...

SHRI E. AHAMMED: There is no 'firm' which has been mentioned here. ...*(Interruptions)*... We did not say, 'any firm'. Therefore, the work on railway crossings will be done by the Railways or by Government institutions, and no private firm will be given. ...*(Interruptions)*... There is no question of any private firm. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Sir, it is the privilege of the House. Where is the answer regarding privatization? ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Therefore, in the answer, we have mentioned generally. ...*(Interruptions)*...

**श्री कलराज मिश्र** : सर, प्रश्न ठीक से पढ़ा नहीं जाता है, इसलिए उसका उत्तर भी ठीक से नहीं आता है।

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Sir, you have to give a ruling on this. It is the privilege of the House...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair has noted your point. ...*(Interruptions)*... I have noted your point.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: As regards the point which has been raised by the hon. Member, Mr. Rudy, I will, specially, look into it. But I would say that the Railways is not entrusting the work to any firm. The Railways, or, even the local bodies, would accept the MPLADS Funds for this purpose. No private firm will be given the job because guarding these level crossings is a very sensitive issue, and we will not part it with any private company.

SHRI ARUN JAITLEY: Sir, as for Question No.285, the hon. Minister has tried to cover up my colleague, Mr. Rudy's point of supplementary. Mr. Rudy says, "He has not given an answer as to whether private parties are also being invited to man the unmanned level crossings." The Minister says, "The Railways will man the unmanned crossings on recommendations of Members of Parliament. ...*(Interruptions)*... There is the word 'also' ...*(Interruptions)*... Members of Parliament are not specialists in manning the unmanned level crossings. So, you have to get the professionals to do the job. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: He says, "it can be sponsored." It is not a recommendation. ...*(Interruptions)*... The MPLADS Fund can be sponsored for this...

SHRI ARUN JAITLEY: Or, is it the case that the Railways will follow the policy of nepotism that nobody will be selected on merit, unless a Member of Parliament recommends it.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI ARUN JAITLEY: These are safety matters. These are not political recommendation matters.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: I would like to point out to the Leader of the Opposition that this Government has changed the criteria. Old criteria have been changed, and the new criteria have been announced. All unmanned level crossings gates where the Train Vehicle Unit is more than 3,000, it will be done by the Government, the Railways. This is one aspect. We have also changed the norms for participation of the hon. Members from their MPLADS Fund, for which we have said, "If one Member of Parliament gives the MPLADS Fund for this, in his constituency, then, the Railways will take another one for him. ...*(Interruptions)*... And this benefit has been given to the hon. Members of Parliament.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

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