

RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 3rd March, 1969/the 12th
Phalgun, 1890 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

REFRESHMENT STALLS AT RAILWAY STATIONS

*236. SHRI JAGAT NARAIN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to end the monopoly of certain persons who have been running refreshment stalls at the railway stations for the past many years;

(b) if so, the details of the proposal;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the railway Catering Committee has recently recommended in its report that the new stalls which are proposed to be opened at railway stations should be allotted only to the owners of the present stalls; and

(d) if so, what are the reasons for making such a recommendation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH): (a) and (b) Since action was taken in 1956 to reduce the scope of work of individual catering contractors as a result of the recommendations of the Estimates Committee there is at present no monopoly holding of catering contracts. However, it is true that in some cases certain individuals or firms have been holding a catering contract at a particular station for a very long time, due to the satisfactory work rendered by them earning them renewal of contract after the expiry of each term. There is no proposal to eliminate such old standing contracts, which have continued without a break due to satisfactory service rendered to the public.

(c) and (d) The Railway Catering and Passenger Amenities Committee, 1967 recommended, *inter-alia*, that the ceiling limit for the holdings of an individual contractor should be raised to 6 units with a view to ensure viability and with a view to attract competent caterers. This recommendation has been accepted by the Government and while issuing instructions to the Zonal Railways to implement this recommendation, it has been clarified that at

stations where there is adequate justification to create new units of catering, the existing contractors at such stations whose services have been good and whose scope of work needs to be increased in accordance with this recommendation, may be given the additional work.

श्री जगत नारायण : मैं वजीर महोदय से यह पूछना चाहता हूँ कि जो पार्लियामेंट की रेलवे कैटरिंग कमेटी बँठाई गई थी उसने कितनी रिकमेंडेशंस की थी और रेलवे डिपार्टमेंट ने उनकी कितनी रिकमेंडेशंस तसलीम कर लीं और कितनों को रद्दी में डाल दिया। एक बात।

दूसरी बात यह है कि इस वक्त जो रेलवे रेफ्रेशमेंट रुम्स का इंतजाम है वह बहुत से स्टेशनों पर ठीक नहीं है और मेम्बरान पार्लियामेंट और दूसरे लोगों ने भी उसके खिलाफ कहा है, तो क्या गवर्नमेंट यह सोच सकती है कि कांट्रैक्ट बेसिस पर रेफ्रेशमेंट रुम्स और स्टाल्स को चलायें, जैसे कि मुझे पंजाब का पता है कि अमृतसर, लुधियाना और जालंधर में साइकिल शेड्स को कांट्रैक्ट पर दिया है और उससे पैसा भी काफी आया है और इंतजाम भी अच्छा है तो क्या उसी तरह कांट्रैक्ट पर रेफ्रेशमेंट रुम्स और स्टाल्स चलायेंगे।

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: In the year 1967 to review the position of the contract system in the Railways the hon. Minister at that time suggested that a Committee should be appointed with Members of Parliament and they should review the position both in respect of contracts as well as departmental catering. In view of that a Committee was constituted and they made certain recommendations. Most of the recommendations have been accepted by the Government and instructions have been issued to the zonal railways to implement them. Regarding the question of abolishing departmental catering and giving contracts we have particularly gone into that matter and we have found that the consensus of opinion is that in most of the cases the public as well as the department consider that the existing system of departmental catering is providing by and large better service to the public and as such they do not consider that departmental catering should be abolished but they have also suggested that in view of the losses that have been incurred by departmental catering further expansion of the

departmental catering system should be kept in abeyance till such time as the departmental catering could consolidate its position and improve the services.

Regarding particular stations like Jullundur, Amritsar and Ludhiana, I am not very sure whether these stations are catered by departmental catering or by contractors but I will review the position and if there are any deficiencies, whether it is departmental catering or contract system, necessary action will be taken.

श्री जगत नारायण : वजीर साहब ने अभी कहा है कि उन्होंने मोनोपली सिस्टम को खत्म करने की काफ़ी हद तक कोशिश की है तो मैं उनसे जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस वक्त कितनी आदद उन लोगों की है जो कि बहुत पुराने काम करने वाले हैं और अभी तक वही लोग स्टैंडर्ड्स, रेफ्रेशमेंट रुम्स का और वेडिंग का भी काम कर रहे हैं।

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH : Sir, normally when we allot contracts, it is done for a period of five years in respect of restaurants and dining cars and for a period of three years in respect of vending and catering contracts and the performance of the contractor is reviewed when his term is being extended or his contract is being renewed. There are cases where contractors are there for a long time only because of the fact that their services have been considered satisfactory and we have no intention of terminating their contract only because of the fact that the contractor has continued for a long time.

SHRI DALPAT SINGH: May I know whether it is within the knowledge of the Government that licences granted to the hawkers and vendors on station platforms are let out by these vendors and hawkers to other persons by taking a good deal of money from those persons and this sort of practice has been going on for the last so many years but the Railway Administration is again and again granting licences to those very hawkers and vendors who are indulging in this kind of activities? Moreover the foodstuffs—the sweets especially—sold by these vendors and hawkers are of a very rotten quality and may I know what the Government is doing in respect of that?

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: So far as departmental vending is concerned, normally the practice is that the Railways prepare the food and give it to the vendors

on a commission basis for sale on the platforms. Of course I agree with the hon. Member—we have also received complaints—that the foodstuffs sold on the platforms are not of a very high standard but all necessary precautions are being taken and if any individual or particular case is brought to my notice I will certainly look into that matter carefully.

श्री मान सिंह वर्मा : माननीय मंत्री जी ने अभी यह कहा है कि बार बार उन्हीं ठेकेदारों को ठेका दिया जाता जिनका कि काम संतोषजनक पाया जाता है परन्तु मैं ऐसा समझता हूँ कि आपका यह कहना गलत है। मेरे पास इस प्रकार के कई उदाहरण हैं कि जहाँ पर जनता की ओर से बार बार उनके खिलाफ शिकायतें आई हैं और उनका काम बहुत असंतोषजनक रहा है परन्तु बार बार उनको ठेके दे दिये जाते हैं। यदि आप चाहेंगे तो मैं आपको इस प्रकार के अनेक उदाहरण दे सकता हूँ। मैं नहीं कह सकता कि आपके पास इस प्रकार की शिकायतें आई हैं या नहीं।

दूसरी बात यह है कि इसी प्रश्न में जो एक विशेष बात पूछी गई थी वह यह थी कि क्या उस कमेटी की रिकमेंडेशंस में यह बात भी कहो गई है कि जो स्टाल होल्डर्स इस समय मौजूद हैं उन्हीं को ठेका दिया जाय, तो इसका स्पष्ट रूप से उत्तर आपकी तरफ से नहीं आया है।

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: So far as the first part of the question is concerned the hon. Member is impressing that there are contractors whose contracts have been renewed in spite of the fact that their services are not satisfactory.

SHRI B. D. KHOBARAGADE: According to a few people.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: Sir, I will be glad to receive information about such instances so that I can carefully look into the matter and take necessary action.

Regarding the other matter about increasing the units of the existing contractor this is a point which we have examined very carefully. Previously, before 1956, the number of units that were being granted to a particular contractor was too many and the Alagesan Committee went into the matter and suggested that the maximum

number of units that should be granted to a contractor should be 20. Even that has been considered to be very liberal by the Estimates Committee which suggested that the maximum number of units should be four, and preferably two. Before this new Committee was set up—and they have gone into the matter—the maximum limit was only two units.

SHRI MAN SINGH VARMA: I wanted the recommendations of the Committee; I wanted to know whether they have recommended that in future the contracts should be given to the present stall holders.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: There is no such recommendation. The recommendation is in cases where it is found that it is not economically viable and there has been a lot of fragmentation in the contract in such cases—not automatically but if it is considered by the Department that increase will improve efficiency—it could be increased up to six.

SHRI KESAVAN (THAZHAVA): May I know from the hon. Minister whether certain restaurant rooms and stalls are lying closed on account of the increased rate of rental imposed by the Railways in recent years? For example, the refreshment room in Quilon is lying closed for the last so many months on account of the high rental. Also, I want to know whether the Government is taking any steps to conduct it by giving it at a lower rent or conducting it departmentally.

SHRI PARIMAL GHOSH: Normally the procedure for fixing the rental or licence fee is that it will depend on the turnover. I have no idea whether any refreshment room is closed specifically for the reason that the licence fee or rental is very high. If the particular case is brought to my notice, I will enquire into it.

SHRI B. D. KHOBARAGADE: May I know, Sir. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question, I am sorry ten minutes are over. Kindly look at the clock and expect me to do justice.

AN HON. MEMBER : This side is not looked at.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am seeing all sides and there is no question of it. You cannot complain, neither Mr. Kulkarni, nor even Mr. Vishampayan, can complain that

I am unjust to them. I have given opportunity to those Members who do not generally get up and who feel that they must put questions. I would certainly prefer them.

TOP OFFICIALS OF HINDUSTAN STEEL LIMITED

*237. **DR. BHAI MAHAVIR:** Will the Minister of STEEL AND HEAVY ENGINEERING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Hindustan Steel Limited has had seven Chairmen, nine Secretaries and about a dozen General Managers since its inception;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Rourkela Plant had no General Manager between December, 1967 and March, 1968 and the Hindustan Steel Limited had no Chairman from December, 1967 to the end of May, 1968;

(c) the extent to which the policy of appointing Civil Service Officials to those technical assignments has been successful; and

(d) whether Government has any proposal under consideration to change this policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND HEAVY ENGINEERING (SHRI K. C. PANT):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On the retirement of the then Chairman, H. S. L. in December, 1967 and pending the appointment of a suitable officer to this post, a post of Deputy Chairman had been sanctioned and the then General Manager of the Rourkela Steel Plant had been appointed thereto to ensure uninterrupted Management of the affairs of the Company. The selection and appointment of persons possessing the required ability and experience to these posts, however, took time.

(c) The posts of Chairman and General Managers are not technical assignments and hence the question does not arise.

(d) Does not arise.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: May I know, Sir, if it is a fact that there were as many as five different persons appointed as Chairman of H.S.L. between the years 1954 and 1963? May I know whether one of the Chairmen at least during his stay of about 3½ years in that post visited the plants only fifteen times and whether the Govern-