

space of one square metre. This shows the need to increase the frequency of trains. DYFI organised a Right to Travel Convention demanding increase in the frequency of trains. On the International Human Rights Day, on December 10, the youth and the students of Mumbai staged a *dharna*, and they were supported by more than 60 social organisations and political parties. Thousands gathered in support of the agitation. Passengers participated voluntarily in the agitation. People's anger grew out of proportion due to the apathy of the authorities. They sought permission to sit on *satyagraha*. Instead of permitting them, the Railway Police indiscriminately lathicharged the gathering. And they also booked the organisers of the mass demonstration under unwarranted sections of the Cr.P.C. and the Railway Act, and sent them to jail. I want to bring to the kind notice of the House that though not even a single train was damaged and there was no threat to the security of passengers, the Police officials booked the organisers under sections 151 and 152 of the Railway Act. These sections facilitate the authorities to imprison the accused for even ten years.

Hence, I request the Government to initiate suitable action to release the innocent people from the police custody and to take steps to ensure that the passengers' demands are met.

Request for financial assistance to Andhra Pradesh State Financial Corporation

SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, the Andhra Pradesh State Financial Corporation, along with 20 other SFCs, was set up by an Act of Parliament. But, now, only four -- Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala and Delhi -- SFCs are working in a better position. The remaining 18 are either closed down or they are on the verge of closure. APSFC is one of the important lending institutions in A.P. and is taking money from other financial institutions/banks and disbursing loans after taking into account its expenditure and margin money. The Act prevents APSFC from accepting deposits, term deposits, or, operate Savings and Current Accounts. As a result, it is on the verge of closure. The other drawback for its backwardness is the Government of India's failure to pay its share of equity for the last twenty years. Now, APSFC is intending to become a commercial bank so that it can not only survive but can also extend loans to people more effectively. So, looking at the track-record of APSFC and the commitment it has towards the people of A.P., I request the Finance Minister for immediately giving a financial package, for

payment of equity by GOI and also for permitting it to convert itself into a bank for its survival. Otherwise, it will also die the way the other SFCs have.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned to meet at 2.00 p.m.

The House then adjourned for lunch at thirty-three minutes past twelve of the clock

The House reassembled after lunch at two minutes past two of the clock,

[MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.]

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

Public Distribution System in the country

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we take up the Short Duration Discussion on the Public Distribution System in the country. Shrimati Brinda Karat.

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी (पश्चिमी बंगाल) : सर, आज इनका मेडन स्पीच है।

श्री सभापति: अगर आपका भाषण अच्छा हुआ तो आपको सभी को मिठाई खिलानी पड़ेगी।

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT (West Bengal): Hon. Chairman, Sir, I would like to express my appreciation to you and, through you, to the leaders of this House who have allotted the time for a discussion on such an important issue for the large majority of the people in our country. Particularly, when there are so many competing issues for public attention, I think, it is very important to bring back on to our political agendas the issues of the poor. And to that extent, the issue of food security, the various dimensions of the issue of food security, the direction of the Government policies on the issue of food security have a very wide impact on the largest number of our people. When we talk about food security, Sir, just to have a benchmark of what we mean by food security, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations has defined it "as the economic and physical access for all people, at all times to have enough food to lead a healthy life". And from this angle, we have to see how far our Public Distribution System, how far the different dimensions of our food security policies ally themselves or align themselves to this international standard. Although the debate today is definitely going to be focussed on