

श्री मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी: सर, अभी रेलवे कन्वेंशन कमेटी का ले लें, इनका परसों कर लें।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, we can take up the Resolution regarding Railway Convention Committee.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH (Karnataka): Not now, Sir. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री नीरज शेखर (उत्तर प्रदेश): सर, मंत्री जी की शादी है, वहां पर जाना है, इसलिए इसको कल कर कीजिए। ...(*व्यवधान*)...

श्री मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी: वह तो आठ बजे है। ...(*व्यवधान*)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Listen. ...(*Interruptions*)... Yesterday, there was a commitment that we would take up the Railways also. Yesterday, you committed to do it. It is of only one hour. We can finish it in half-an-hour. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI: Fifteen minutes, Sir. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: No, Sir. ...(*Interruptions*)... Don't push it, Sir. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री नीरज शेखर: सर, इसको कल कीजिए। ...(*व्यवधान*)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Suresh Prabhu, please move the Resolution.

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Recommendations contained in First Report of Railway Convention Committee (2014)

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU): Sir, I move:

That this House approves the recommendations contained in Paras 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the First Report of Railway Convention Committee (2014), appointed to review the rate of dividend payable by the Railway Undertaking to General Revenues and other ancillary matters, which was presented to both the Houses of Parliament on 22nd December, 2015.

The question was proposed.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Resolution moved. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH (Karnataka): What are you doing, Sir? ...(*Interruptions*)... You are just pushing it through. ...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please listen. *...(Interruptions)...* Yesterday, we were going to take it up. When we were about to adjourn, this question was raised. Then, it was said that one Bill and Railway Resolution would be taken up today. It was to be taken up yesterday. At that time also, Mr. Jairam Ramesh stood up and said, 'no'. *...(Interruptions)...* Now, what is the guarantee that he will not say the same tomorrow? *...(Interruptions)...* That is over.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: I have been sitting here from 11 o' clock. I have sat here patiently. Sir, I am willing to sit for another two hours. Let us have an honest discussion. *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We can finish it in half-an-hour. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, please have a full discussion. *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Only one hour is allotted. No full discussion on this. *...(Interruptions)...* I have only five names, which means that it will take twenty minutes only. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, my only request is...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jairam, what are you doing? *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, my only request is, don't short-circuit this.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is not short-circuiting. *...(Interruptions)...*

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): Sir, it is like casting aspersions. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: You are a Minister. *...(Interruptions)...* Please behave like a Minister.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jairam Ramesh, let me read out the names which I have got. First is, Mr. Narayan Lal Panchariya. Are you willing to speak now? *...(Interruptions)...*

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS, AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI): Sir, we withdraw his name.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Next is, Shri Shankarbhai Vegad.

SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI: Sir, we withdraw his name also.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay, both names are withdrawn. Next is, Shri K. R. Arjunan. *...(Interruptions)...* Okay, he will speak. Next is, Shri Derek O' Brien.

[Mr. Deputy Chairman]

He is not here. Next is, Shri Ritabrata Banerjee. Do you wish to speak? Okay. So, only two Members are there to speak. *...(Interruptions)...* I will allow all of them. So, why should we postpone it? Tomorrow, you will stand up and ask for postponement. *...(Interruptions)...* What is the guarantee? *...(Interruptions)...* Yesterday, you said this. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, I am willing to sit here for one hour. *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: In half-an-hour, it will be over.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: My request to you is not to compress it. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI: Sir, please call the speaker. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, please don't compress it. *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This is an unnecessary allegation. *...(Interruptions)...* Mr. Naqvi, please sit down. *...(Interruptions)...* I am not compressing it. I have only five names. I am ready to allow all of them to speak. *...(Interruptions)...* How is it that I am compressing? Yesterday, when it was about to be taken up, then, you said, 'tomorrow'. Now, when it is being taken up, now, you are saying 'tomorrow'. What is the guarantee that tomorrow you will again not say, 'tomorrow'? *...(Interruptions)...* Mr. Panchariya is not speaking. Mr. Shankarbhai Vegad is not speaking. Now, Mr. K. R. Arjunan. *...(Interruptions)...* Mr. Arjunan, your time is three minutes but you can speak for five minutes. Take two minutes extra.

SHRI K. R. ARJUNAN (Tamil Nadu): I thank hon. Dr. Puratchi Thalaivi, Amma, for giving me the opportunity to speak. Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, please allow me to highlight in this august House the issues regarding Nilgiri Mountain Railway in the Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu. Sir, I would like to speak in Tamil. *Hon. Deputy Chairman, Sir, Nilgiris district is hailed as the 'Queen of Mountains'. The Mountain railways which operate from Mettupalayam to Ooty *via* Coonoor has been recognized as a world heritage site by UNESCO. Domestic and foreign tourists who visit Ooty, show great interest in travelling in the mountain railways. This train is always overcrowded. Hence, I request that additional coaches with modern seating arrangements have to be provided to this train, which is operated from Mettupalayam. Moreover, old coaches have to be replaced with modernized coaches. I also request that modern toilets have to be built at Coonoor, Wellington, Aruvangaadu, Ketti and

*English translation of the original speech made in Tamil.

Ooty railway stations for the convenience of passengers. In addition to this, I request the Government to provide a steam engine to operate this train.

Sir, Rail transportation is very important for the development of infrastructure and progress. In the recently presented Railway Budget, many demands were raised on behalf of the Government of Tamil Nadu. Under the leadership of hon. Puratchithalaivi Amma, a document called 'Vision 2023' has been issued enumerating the vision for the industrial development of Tamil Nadu. In this document, ten important railway projects have been included. They are considered to be very crucial for the industrial development of Tamil Nadu.

Complete doubling of Chennai-Kanyakumari line,

Sriperumbudur Guindy freight line

Chennai Thoothukudi freight corridor

High Speed Passenger rail link between Chennai, Madurai and Kanyakumari,

High Speed Passenger rail link between Madurai and Coimbatore

High Speed Passenger rail link between Chennai and Coimbatore

High Speed rail link between Chennai and Bengaluru

Chennai Bengaluru freight corridor

Avadi Guduvancheri rail link

Avadi/Thiruvallur-Ennore Port link

are those 10 projects. Of these,

Chennai Thoothukudi freight corridor

High Speed Passenger rail link between Chennai, Madurai and Kanyakumari,

High Speed Passenger rail link between Madurai and Coimbatore is given high priority by the State Government of Tamil Nadu. The State Government of Tamil Nadu has already indicated that it would be willing, in principle, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Railways to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle to promote these projects. Moreover, a number of projects announced for Tamil Nadu in the earlier Railway Budgets have not commenced so far. More than twenty projects have not commenced. Due to paucity of time, I would like to point out only some of these projects.

New line from Jolarpettai to Hosur *via* Krishnagiri

New line between Mayiladuthurai-Thriukadaiyur-Tharangambadi-Tirunallar and Karaikkal

[Shri K. R. Arjunan]

New line from Ramanathapuram-Kanyakumari *via* Thoothukudi-Thiruchendur

New line between Thanjavur and Ariyalur

New line from Madurai to Karaikudi via Melur.

Sir,

All these projects have to be completed as expeditiously as possible.

I would like to rephrase the quote of American poet Robert Frost.

The projects are lovely, momentous and constructive

But you have promises to keep

And miles to go before we sleep

And miles to go before we sleep.

Dear Railway Minister,

Where trains are reaching on time,

Where berths in trains are clean,

Where toilets in trains are cleaned properly,

Where senior citizens are getting lower berths,

Where there is no harm in trains due to rats and bedbugs,

Where passengers reach platform conveniently through escalators at Railway stations,

Where clean platforms, seats, boarding rooms are available at railway stations,

Where frequency of trains are available to avoid congestion to people,

Where children enjoy their food given at trains,

Where women travel safely in trains,

Our dear Railway Minister, lead the people of Tamil Nadu to such a wonderful journey. With these words, I conclude my speech. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, Mr. Derek O'Brien. Your time is only three minutes. But you may take five minutes. Instead of three, I am giving you two extra minutes. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN (West Bengal): Sir, firstly, I am out of breath. *...(Interruptions)...* Because I saw this happening, I thought you were going to take it up tomorrow and so I came rushing. *...(Interruptions)...* No, no. I am speaking. *...(Interruptions)...* I have not brought my notes, but I will speak. *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I can allow you after one or two speakers. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, I hope you know now why I was requesting you to take it up tomorrow because Mr. Derek O'Brien was not present. ...*(Interruptions)*... Now, he has come running. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Sir, this is a serious issue. ...*(Interruptions)*... Let me begin. ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, the Indian Railways is more on time than the Air India. ...*(Interruptions)*...

Sir, the Railway Convention Committee actually has only one item in its agenda for the year and that is to announce dividend. Suresh Prabhuji, the honourable and enthusiastic Railway Minister, is very, very enthusiastic and very earnest in his efforts. We really appreciate that, especially with the way he is coordinating with all the States. We appreciate that, Mr. Suresh Prabhu.

I want to make a few points because this discussion may be for 20-25 minutes, but it is worth ₹ 12,000 crore or ₹ 13,000 crore. I will tell you why it is worth ₹ 12,000 crore or ₹ 13,000 crore. Sir, from 1920s, I think it was in 1924, the Railway Finance was separated from the General Finance. The General Budget and the Indian Railways got separated. So, after that, the Railways became a public sector undertaking to make profit. That was the old colonial leftover or hangover. Now, Sir, the commitment of the Railways has changed. It is not only about profit; it is also about social responsibility. In 1964, on the recommendations of this Committee, an amount of ₹ 100 crore was given as dividend to the Indian Railways, and after that, the Indian Railways used it for whatever projects. In the last few years, this dividend has been seven per cent, six per cent and five per cent, so much so that now, this year, the Committee has recommended that the dividend will have to come down from five per cent to four per cent. But, that still means, Mr. Suresh Prabhu will have ₹ 6,000 crore. ...*(Interruptions)*... Papers have come to me, but let me leave them aside. He will have ₹ 6,000 crore in each pocket – ₹ 6,000 crore in the left pocket and ₹ 6,000 crore in the right pocket. So, my question first is: Why do we need to give even one per cent takeaway from the Railways to the Central Government? Why? Let that money remain with the Railways because that can be used for other social projects. You use it in Kashmir; you use it in places which are unconnected. So, the Standing Committee on Railways made a very serious recommendation this year. My colleague was the Chairman. The Standing Committee on Railways made a recommendation of zero per cent. I understand that if suddenly from ₹ 12,000 crore, we give him zero, then Prabhuji will be very disappointed. However, Sir, I really think, as a parliamentarian, this House should take up this

[Shri Derek O'Brien]

7.00 P.M.

issue and reduce it to four per cent, then to two per cent, and it may go like that. The Railways cannot have this extra amount of ₹ 12,000 crore. I will tell you why. Once this money goes to the Railways, with no offence meant to Suresh Prabhuji, then the priorities change. Let me give you one example and that is the problem about giving away this money. What priorities will change? Sir, this is serious. You please give me a few minutes because I am a bit familiar with this. For example, take the case of bullet train. Now, we all want the bullet train. It is very good. But, Sir, the cost of building a bullet train system even if Japan gives us money will be ₹ 90,000 crore to ₹ 1,00,000 crore. What will it do? It is going to connect Mumbai with Ahmedabad. Sir, you put that money of about ₹ 40,000 crore or ₹ 50,000 crore in the National Highways. You will have better roads. You put it into your other programmes. You can increase your safety. Otherwise, this will become one big problem. I don't have any problem with having a bullet train, but I think if you use your money like this, Suresh Prabhuji, it will be a bullet but it will be a misfired bullet. I would rather want you to put it in other projects. Today, you look at the Railways. He has inherited some of it; may not be all through his fault. There is an amount of over ₹ 1,00,000 crore cost overrun on the Railways. If you look at the smaller projects, it is about ₹ 7,000 crore. So, with all this kind of budding, my simple point is the same, like we asked in the morning. Why do you want to impose cess? I would like all parties, Opposition, Government and everyone to consider this old colonial system of giving railway money and sucking out railway money — one Mr. Acworth thought about this system in 1924 — whether we still have to follow the system. If you look at Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the fund allocated is ₹ 22,000 crores. The fund allocated to the roads and highways is ₹ 55,000 crores. The thought I want to leave behind is, Sir, since, the concept of the Indian Railways has changed from colonial times and, today, there is social responsibility as well as commercial viability, the only way is not to give money to the Finance Ministry. What is, basically, happening is, Shri Suresh Prabhu is giving Shri Arun Jaitley, ₹ 12,000 crores. That is the bottom line of this, which we are discussing today. Look at the Standing Committee's recommendations. Look at the discussions held in the Railway Convention Committee. I think this is beyond a political issue and, I think, the Indian Railways, and I speak for them, must keep all the money; so no more dividends. This year, जो मिल गया, बस हो गया।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Ritabrata Banerjee. Your time is two minutes, but I will give you two minutes more.

SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, please give me five minutes. For other people you gave three minutes more. ...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, no. Everybody has been given two minutes more. I will give you also two minutes more.

SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: Sir, first of all, my party have always had this position that railways is a public transport and the public transport, necessarily, must have Government support and allocation for its running. Looking at the public transport like railways, as a commercial entity, is fundamentally wrong. Unfortunately, this paradigm shift, to a large extent, has taken place in the case of our railways.

Sir, in a country like ours, rail which is the cheapest mode of communications and crores of common people are using them. In such a case, passenger fares cannot be fixed on cost benefit theories. The budgetary support is not sufficient and the support also is decreasing day by day. Railway seeks Supplementary Budget support. Every year we are saying that they seek Supplementary Budget, for more support. We feel that there is no justification for a reverse flow of funds from the Railways to the General Exchequer in the name of dividend. The Standing Committee on Railways has examined the issue of paying dividend by the Railways and they have recommended the practice of paying dividend to the General Revenues be kept in abeyance till the financial health of the Indian Railways improved and the proposed investment plan is implemented in its entirety. I want to point out the observation of the Ministry of Railways in this regard. The hon. Railway Minister is here. The first Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Railways to the Committee reveals many startling observations. While arguing against payment of dividends, it pleads, (i) "Railways should not be equated with other purely commercial public sector undertakings"; (ii) "a dividend relief at this time would be a strong boost to Railways"; (iii) "a dividend relief will significantly ease out debt servicing burden on a long term basis." Sir, Railways is a socially responsible organisation. We cannot forget that Railways is doing this and giving concessions not to one or two categories of people, but, the Railways is giving concession to 53 special categories of people and incurring heavy revenue loss. Sir, the revenue loss incurred by Railways in view of the concession, actually, should be reimbursed by the Central Government in addition to the gross budgetary support. Total amount of revenue loss to the Central Government by forgoing the dividend will be miniscule. But for the Railways, it will help them to tide over some shortfalls.

My senior colleague, Shri Derek O'Brien, was speaking about Bullet Train.

[Shri Ritabrata Banerjee]

Recently, China has announced that they will be running a Bullet Train at the speed of 380 km/hour. Last year, on the Anniversary of the People's Republic of China, the President there announced that they will be running a train to the base camp of Mt. Everest. This is possible only through the support of the Government. The entire railway system there is publicly-funded. There is no private participation.

Lastly, I want to mention one point. Incidentally, — Mr. Derek O'Brien spoke just now — when I was in school, Mr. Derek O'Brien's father, whom I admire very much, the legendary Mr. Neil O'Brien, who has been the 'Father of Quiz' in our country, had come for the screening of a movie and spoke on Satyajit Ray.

I conclude and reiterate that except for technical reasons and bureaucratic compulsions there is no justification for payment of dividend on the capital owned by Railways. Now, I come to the point that I was making. There was a screening programme of Satyajit Ray's debut film '*Pather Panchali*' and legendary Mr. Neil O'Brien was speaking there. I was the student of class six at that period of time in 1991.

In that film, "*Pather Panchali*", you can see a little boy and a little girl, running along the moving train. That is the most significant scene of the entire film. That film had secured the Golden Carbao Award. Later on Mr. Satyajit Roy got the lifetime achievement award at the Oscar. In that particular portion of the film, a young boy with his elder sister running towards the railways, manifests the dream of the Indian people. If that dream has to live, the Government support has to be in a very big way. As the hon. Member, Shri Derek O'Brien and other Members have said — I also feel and my party feels — this dividend must not go and it should remain with the Indian Railways.

SHRI NEERAJ SHEKHAR (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, I will take 30 seconds to put a question.

श्री उपसभापति: पूछ लीजिए।

श्री नीरज शेखर: माननीय उपसभापति जी, मेरी समझ में यह आ रहा है कि डिविडेंड तब दिया जाता है, जब प्रॉफिट हो। मैं रेल मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि रेलवे को कितना प्रॉफिट हुआ कि 12 हजार का डिविडेंड दे रहे हैं?

श्री शंकरभाई एन. वेगड़ (गुजरात): उपसभापति महोदय, रेल अभिसमय समिति द्वारा वर्ष 2014-15 तथा 2015-16 के लिए लाभांश को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए की गई अनुशंसाओं को लागू करने हेतु, इस संदर्भ में प्रस्तुत संकल्प पर चर्चा हेतु आपने मुझे समय दिया, इसके लिए मैं आपका आभारी हूँ।

महोदय, रेलवे राष्ट्र की जीवन रेखा है। यह सामरिक दृष्टि से महत्वपूर्ण होने के साथ-साथ जन-साधारण के मध्य यात्री तथा माल, दोनों प्रकार के यातायात का सुगम तथा सस्ता साधन रही है। भारतीय रेल आम जनता के बीच सरकार की एक चलती-फिरती पहचान है। राष्ट्र के संवर्धन में इसकी क्या भूमिका रही है, यह किसी से छिपी हुई बात नहीं है।

भारतीय रेल देश में 25 लाख से अधिक परिवारों का, जो या तो उसके कर्मचारी हैं या पेंशनर्स हैं, सीधे तौर पर पोषण भी करती है। कुछ समय से सरकार की बदली हुई प्राथमिकताओं के चलते रेलवे को उतनी महत्ता प्रदान नहीं की जा रही थी। हालांकि वर्तमान सरकार ने रेलवे को प्राथमिकता देना प्रारंभ कर दिया है, लेकिन अब भी देश का फोकस मुख्यतः सड़क क्षेत्र पर है, जिसके विकास के लिए न तो संसाधनों की कमी है और न प्राथमिकता की। साथ ही इसे सरकारी मदद तथा निजी क्षेत्र का भरपूर सहयोग मिल रहा है, लेकिन रेलवे के लिए सीमित मात्रा में ही संसाधन उपलब्ध कराए जा रहे हैं। सड़क तथा वायु क्षेत्र द्वारा दी गई प्रतिस्पर्धावश रेलवे का यातायात किसी न किसी हद तक इन क्षेत्रों की तरफ जा रहा है। यह सर्वविदित है कि रेलवे के विकास तथा आधुनिकीकरण के लिए बहुत धन की आवश्यकता होती है, क्योंकि यह एक पूंजी प्रबल क्षेत्र है। अभी तक का अनुभव यह बताता है कि इसके विकास में निजी क्षेत्र का योगदान हतोत्साहित करने वाला रहा है। अगले पांच वर्षों में 8.56 लाख करोड़ रुपए का निवेश प्रस्तावित है, जो अपने आप में महत्वाकांक्षी योजना है। सरकार को देखना चाहिए कि यह योजना पूरी हो।

रेलवे की यात्री सेवा पूरी तरह से घाटे पर आधारित रही है। इस सेवा को चलाने के लिए लागत का मात्र 50 प्रतिशत ही लोगों से वसूला जाता है। भारत की गरीब जनता का ध्यान रखते हुए इससे अधिक वसूला भी नहीं जा सकता, जिस कारण रेलवे को प्रतिवर्ष 30,000 करोड़ रुपए से ज्यादा का घाटा हो रहा है। अभी तक इस घाटे की प्रतिपूर्ति माल भाड़े द्वारा हो जाती थी, लेकिन उसकी भी सीमा है। सड़क तथा वायु क्षेत्र से मिलने वाली चुनौती के कारण यह सेवा और अधिक दुष्प्रभावित हो रही है। अतः रेलवे की जीविका केवल सरकार की संकल्प शक्ति पर ही निर्भर होगी। सरकार को यह देखना होगा कि रेलवे को उत्तरोत्तर कैसे अधिक से अधिक संसाधन मुहैया कराए जाएं। साथ ही रेलवे में सुधार करना भी बहुत आवश्यक है, जिससे कि भारतीय रेल एक आधुनिक रेल बने। उच्च गति रेलें चलाना तथा अधिकाधिक माल ढोने की क्षमता प्राप्त करना एक उच्च प्राथमिकता होनी चाहिए। इसके लिए एक उन्नत तकनीकी अत्यावश्यक है। साथ ही रेल उपभोक्ता बेहतर सुविधा के अधिकारी हों, इन सब के लिए संसाधन उपलब्ध कराना सरकार की जिम्मेदारी है।

हम देखते हैं कि रेलवे विभाग ही केवल ऐसा महकमा है, जो केंद्र सरकार का एक भाग होने के बावजूद केंद्र सरकार द्वारा निवेशित पूंजी पर लाभांश देता है। इसके अलावा कई ऐसी यात्री तथा माल सेवाएं हैं, जिन्हें रेलवे राष्ट्रहित में चला रही है, लेकिन इनके परिचालन में रेलवे को बहुत अधिक घाटा उठाना पड़ता है। रेलवे के लिए संसाधन उपलब्ध कराने हेतु न केवल लाभांशदायिता में भविष्य में पूरी तरह छूट दिए जाने की आवश्यकता है, बल्कि यात्री तथा माल सेवा के परिचालन में होने वाले घाटे की प्रतिपूर्ति भी सरकार द्वारा की जानी चाहिए। इस के अलावा रेलवे की महत्वपूर्ण परियोजनाओं के लिए वित्त-पोषण भी पूरी तरह से केंद्र सरकार द्वारा किया जाना चाहिए। यदि ये सारे कार्य नहीं किए गए तो रेलवे का जीवन संरक्षण कठिन प्रतीत होता है।

[श्री शंकरभाई एन. वेगड़]

महोदय, मैं इस समिति द्वारा की गई अनुशंसाओं के संकल्प पत्र को पारित किए जाने का समर्थन करता हूं। साथ ही रेलवे के लाभ के लिए एक सुझाव मंत्री जी को देना चाहूंगा। सर, साउथ इंडिया से जो 25-30 ट्रेन्स आती हैं, उनमें इलैक्ट्रिक इंजन होता है। वे अहमदाबाद आकर खड़ी रहती हैं। उन्हें सौराष्ट्र तक यानी अहमदाबाद से वाया सननगर, जामनगर से द्वारका तक, पोरबन्दर और सोमनाथ तक इलैक्ट्रिक इंजन लगाने और इलेक्ट्रीकरण करने के बाद ले जाया जाए। इस का पूरा लाभ सौराष्ट्र को और साथ ही पूरे इंडिया से द्वारका, सोमनाथ और पोरबन्दर आने वाले प्रवासी यात्रियों को भी मिलेगा। महोदय, यह मेरा सुझाव है जिससे रेलवे को भी लाभ मिलेगा।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jairam Ramesh, are you speaking?

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Yes, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Since we are late, take only five minutes.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, I will be very brief.

Sir, I hope now you know why I wanted this discussion tomorrow. I knew my friend, Derek O'Brien, was very keen on speaking, but he was not here.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But he made a very effective speech.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, he was not here. So, I was filibustering till such time that he came. So, he should actually thank me for giving this opportunity.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So, I hope you won't filibuster now!

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: No, Sir.

Sir, I have only one point to make to the hon. Railway Minister. What we are discussing today is a formality. The Railway Convention Committee, the dividend, are all legacies which we have inherited. It is a formality. But how does this arise? It arises because in 1928, or thereabout, we had a Railway Budget distinct from a General Budget, because capital expenditure on the Railways, at that point of time, accounted for almost 65 per cent of the capital expenditure of the Government of India.

Sir, for the last few years, I have been saying repeatedly, in Parliament and outside, and I have been writing, that the logic of having a separate Railway Budget has gone; the era of having a separate Railway Budget is over, and the Railway Budget should be a part of the General Budget. My question to the hon. Railway Minister is direct and pointed. In the last few weeks, I have been reading, as I am

sure you have been reading too, reports that there have been discussions on doing away with the Railway Budget in keeping with the recommendations of the Bibek Debroy panel. I want to know from the hon. Railway Minister whether this year's Budget would be his last Railway Budget, or if we are going to continue with this antiquated colonial system of having a separate Railway Budget. Now, the single biggest cause for the financial ill-health of the Railways is this separate Railway Budget. If you want to bring the Railways back into health, stop the practice of having a separate Railway Budget.

Sir, I want to ask the hon. Railway Minister if a decision has been taken. What is his thinking? What can we expect as far as the Railway Budget is concerned?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So, you want to deprive him of the privilege and pleasure of presenting a Budget! See, this is his attitude. Look at that!

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, he has already presented two Budgets.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, the hon. Minister may please reply.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, I thank all the hon. Members who have spoken and those who have not spoken, but have still supported and participated in the discussion as to why the Railways must run efficiently, why the Railways must be supported and why the dividend should not be paid. It is an argument that everybody has been making. This point has been made and supported by all Members of Parliament from time to time. The Railways is an asset of national importance. It is a strategic asset for the country. Running the Railways means actually running it economically, helping common people to travel using that mode of transportation and thus, helping all sections of the society. So, this is important. Sir, I fully agree with and thank Mr. Derek and also other Members who have supported this. Sir, one of the hon. Members wanted to know whether the Railways have profits or not. Sir, the Railways is bearing completely an unbearable burden, particularly, this year, of almost ₹ 36,000 to ₹ 40,000 crores; depending upon how much will be the burden of allowances. It is a burden coming out of the Pay Commission's report. Sir, this House passed a very progressive law. You see, increasing the ceiling of minimum bonus payable, is the biggest burden because, the Railways is the largest employer in the country. So, the burden comes on the Railways.

Thirdly, the Railways is already carrying on excess burden of almost ₹ 34,000 crores of subsidy. We give public service obligations, plus, as my good friend from West Bengal pointed out that we are also giving concessions to all kinds of

[Shri Suresh Prabhu]

people. In fact, I could be the first Railway Minister requesting everybody not to take concessions because so much of concessions are already built-in in the railway ticket itself that no more concessions are required. But still, this is the legacy. So, all these put together, the Railways is carrying a huge burden. Otherwise, we need money. First, we need surpluses so that we can put this money into new lines, we can modernize, we can use high technology as you have mentioned about China. This is absolutely right that all these high speed railway projects are publicly funded to support a strategic region for the country. Then, there are losses the Railways are suffering of running those lines which are not profitable. But they have been put up because there are necessary strategic regions. I would also like to actually increase the CAPEX. So, this year, we have decided to increase the CAPEX for the next five years, to almost ₹ 8,50,000 crores. That is necessary for the survival of the Railways because, otherwise, how are we going to get revenues? Sir, we have got only two streams of revenue, one is freight, two-thirds, one-third is coming from passengers. That is not sustainable. But even to maintain these two, we need to have more lines so that more cargo can come to the Railways. Today, we are running the railway cargo trains without time table. We started for the first time after announcing the Budget 5 pairs of time-tabled freight trains on identified routes. But still, to run these units, more investment is required. So, all of this would need more money. If you pay dividend, it is actually taking away that rightful money that could have gone into some of these activities. So, therefore, we should not be paying dividend. This is an argument. Of course, the Railway Convention Committee has made recommendations. I will go by the recommendations as well as the final sense of the House. But, this is something which needs to be looked into.

Sir, I just want to give some information because many of you have mentioned, Sir, all over the world — I am not quoting the figures of China — the Railways are highly subsidized, including one of the most market-oriented economies, like in Germany, the subsidy is 19 billion dollars, in France, it is as much as 14.7 billion dollars, in all countries, but interestingly, we inherited a system during the imperial rule within the British rule, the United Kingdom gives a subsidy of 5 billion dollars. It amounts to almost 0.08 dollar per passenger kilometer. And what are you asking for? You are asking for a subsidy which is ₹ 34,000 crores which is actually there, which amounts to only about 0.004 US dollars, not even one cent. So, you can imagine how much of the subsidy we are asking. It is a very miniscule amount. So, we really need this. We have all the Committees, including the Parliamentary Standing Committee. Everybody has recommended dividend should not be paid. So,

Sir, my request would be, if at all, we agree that we have to go by the Committee's recommendations, then, at least, I would request that we should postpone the liability of paying dividend for fourfive years so that at least, to that extent, we get a leeway. That amount can be retained in the Railways. That can be used for CAPEX, that can be used for something better.

As far as the Railway Budget is concerned, I fully agree. In fact, I had written a letter personally to the hon. Finance Minister saying that we are willing for a merger. I don't know the outcome. In fact, I had suggested this even the last year. So, it is not that I just want to present the Budget. I am looking at it from the national interest. That point had been made. But the merger should happen in such a way that the Railways should become a part of the overall Budget so that the CAPEX, the revenue deficit, all this can be taken care of. So, I think, this is something, which should happen, and this will be the long term interest of the Railways, the long term interest of the Indian economy because I feel that the Railways itself can contribute to, at least, 2 to 2.5 per cent of the GDP, and that is a potential the Railways has. But for that, we need investments, we need strategic investments, we need investments in a manner that can really be very interesting. Sir, the China rail spending are as high as 130 billion dollars. That is what China gets. And, Sir, in many of these countries, very interestingly, the Railways had to incur debt when they are expanding and most of the debt is taken over by the General Budget eventually. This has happened in case of Japan also. Of course, I will go by the House and the recommendation of the RCC is already there. But, the Standing Committee and other Parliamentary Committees have said from time to time that Railways should not be subject to dividend. I hope the merger of the Budget will happen in a way like how it normally happens in roads, healthcare and education, how those Demands for Grants come in. I think we should integrate in that manner. That will be good.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Would you expect the merger to take place this year?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: I don't know yet.

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Sir, the Resolution here is asking for this dividend to be paid. So, my understanding is that the Railway Minister is not keeping it on a pause. That is going through. That will go through now.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, yes.

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Then, the second point, is, Sir, we are in the middle of August and the Railway Budget is coming up in five-six months. This is a big issue, like a merger is not going to happen in the next five-six months. ...*(Interruptions)*...

[Shri Derek O' Brien]

One minute. The other point which he raised, I want a clarification on that, Sir, because he mentioned something, so I want to take that up seriously. Even this year has passed by or as we are saying, deemed to have passed by. Then, this pause which you are talking about, is that your view on that? The pausing of the dividend for the next....

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: I think we pass the Resolution. That is something which I will request the hon. Finance Minister. I will request him separately but I think that is something which should not be part of the Resolution. That will be something which I will take it up.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, Shri S. Muthukaruppan.

SHRI S. MUTHUKARUPPAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, my colleague, Shri K. R. Arjunan raised some points before the hon. Minister. There are so many projects which have not yet started in Tamil Nadu.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, that is not relevant now.

SHRI S. MUTHUKARUPPAN: Please respond, Sir, there are so many projects which have not yet started.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: He may not be having the details now.

SHRI S. MUTHUKARUPPAN: You please consider the Tamil Nadu specific projects. Sir, my party Member has raised that question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, that is correct. That he will consider but he may not have the details with him now.

SHRI S. MUTHUKARUPPAN: Sir, can I raise these questions before the hon. Minister?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, yes; any request made here will be examined and considered by the Government. Why do you worry about that?

SHRI S. MUTHUKARUPPAN: My party Member raised it, and I am asking a clarification from the Minister.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, yes; no harm in that. But he cannot reply to that as he is not prepared with the details.

SHRI S. MUTHUKARUPPAN: Okay.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This is a different issue. That is it.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, the hon. Minister has himself given the suggestion for a pause. Why don't we agree to his suggestion?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What is that?

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: That is what I am saying. If the Railway Minister himself is saying, then we agree to that suggestion.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: He has himself made the suggestion and we agree to the suggestion.

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: We welcome his suggestion.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Sir, the pause has come from the Minister and we agree with that.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, I have moved a Resolution which is recommending for adoption of the Committee's recommendation. In view of this, what all the hon. Members have said in this House as well as in the other House, I will request the hon. Finance Minister about it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is it because I have the Resolution which is moved by the Minister himself. It is up to him to decide whether to withdraw it or not. Now, the Resolution is with me, so I have to put it to vote.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH: Can I make an amendment to the Resolution?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You could have done that before, but not now. Now, time is over. You could have done it. I shall now put the Resolution moved by the hon. Minister to vote.

The question is:

"That this House approves the recommendations contained in Paras 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the First Report of Railway Convention Committee (2014), appointed to review the rate of dividend payable by the Railway Undertaking to General Revenues and other ancillary matters, which was presented to both the Houses of Parliament on 22nd December, 2015."

The motion was adopted.
