

*Statement*

(a) to (c) No, Sir. There is no plan for large scale privatisation of railway routes. There is a proposal to outsource the commercial and on board services of a few trains and also to permit private players to induct modern rakes to run trains on select routes with an objective to provide improved service delivery to passengers. However, the responsibility of train operations and safety rests with Indian Railways.

**Privatization of operation of railways**

\*68. SHRI MANAS RANJAN BHUNIA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has planned to privatize operations of railways in a phased manner including the maintenance of the platforms;
- (b) if so, the details on the exact plan of Government; and
- (c) the manner in which this plan would be executed?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

*Statement*

(a) to (c) No, Sir. There is no proposal to privatise the operations of Railways. However, there is a proposal to outsource the commercial and on board services of a few trains and also to permit private players to induct modern rakes to run trains on select routes with an objective to provide improved service delivery to passengers. The responsibility of train operations and safety certification rests with Indian Railways. Outsourcing of certain services like station cleaning, pay and use toilets, retiring rooms, parking and platforms maintenance etc. is being done on need based manner to improve cleanliness and other services.

DR. K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Sir, it appears that the Government is thinking of an idea to privatize a set of services of railways on select routes. If the idea is implemented, this will definitely affect prospects of the existing railway employees and future recruitment of railways. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister what safeguards that the Government is proposing to take in this regard.

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: Sir, the interest of railway employees is protected. There is no problem for the existing railway employees due to privatization. And, we are not going in for privatization; it is only corporatization to improve railway services to passengers.

DR. K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Sir, the Indian Railways is the poor man's affordable transport. I am very sure, the Government is following all regulatory procedures for controlling the charges for services provided by the private players. May I know from the hon. Minister what are the controlling measures that the Government proposes to take in this regard?

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: Sir, the land, stations, tracks, including the loco, are with the Indian Railways. Only commercial and onboard services can be given to the private organisers. The private organisers can create more employment. And, there will not be any impact on the existing employment. So, providing more services and generating more employment will be in the interest of the country.

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Sir, the Indian Railways has the largest network in the world. And, over the last seven decades, a lot of improvement and facilities have been granted to the commuters. The reply to the question mentions that the Government is planning to privatise certain sections or sectors of the Railways, which will give more facilities to the commuters. Welcome! But, I would like to know how come that, during the last seventy years, there has been no change in the steps used for boarding or deboarding the coaches. So many accidents have happened because of this. And, the people have fallen in between. It is a very hostile proposition, as it exists today, to those who are differently abled. Does this too figure in the plan of the Railway Minister?

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: Sir, I appreciate the concern and the suggestion of the hon. Member. Today, we are doing a lot of improvements in the Railways. Safety and cleanliness are the utmost priorities for us. If you compare the conditions of the railway stations that earlier used to be and now what it is today, there is a sea change. There are same employees. But only mindset has been changed. Today, railway stations are so clean that people take selfies there. Apart from safety, we are taking utmost care ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: What about the steps used for climbing or getting down from the coaches? ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: Yes, Sir, that problem is there. The hon. Member has made a very good suggestion.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Those are not friendly to differently abled people.

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: Yes, you are right. Even I visited Vadodara, the other day. The problem is there. Along with the disabled people, their

relatives are also travelling with them in those coaches. Many times cases have also been booked. So, now, we will take care of what the hon. Member has raised.

**SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA:** Sir, first I would like to compliment the hon. Railway Minister and appreciate him for immediately responding to the grievances brought to his notice, even though a tweeter message.

Sir, let me be precise. I think, corporatization is only a polished name of privatisation. I don't think there is a vast difference between both of these. If any, you can explain that. There is a proposal to outsource the commercial and onboard services on a few trains. But, it is already there. The problem is, the onboard service is a very essential one. Earlier, if there were any complaints ...(*Interruptions*)...

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Put your question, please.

**SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA:** Earlier, if there used to be any complaint, we were to immediately lodge the same with the Railways. But, now, these people are outsourced. They do not respond to the passengers. Will you entrust the responsibility with the Travelling Ticket Examiner? Or, will you give an online number or a mobile number to make the complaint?

**SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA:** The hon. Member has raised a very valid point. Even if we go for commercial and on board services, the Railway authorities will be there. There is no change in this thing. Safety is most important. It is with the Indian Railways. Apart from that, if any problem is there, the Railway authorities will be there to take care. You need not worry about that.

**श्रीमती कान्ता कर्दम:** सभापति महोदय, जब हम यात्रा करते हैं, तो रेलवे प्लेटफॉर्म पर देखते हैं कि वहां पर महिलाएं अपनी-अपनी ट्रेन का इंतजार करती हैं और कई बार ट्रेन का इंतजार करने के लिए उन्हें वहां पर रात भी बितानी पड़ती है। वे खुले में ही वहां पर अपना समय बिताती हैं और वे अपने छोटे-छोटे बच्चों को लेकर ऐसे ही खुले में अपनी ट्रेन का इंतजार करती हैं। ऐसे में उनके साथ जो छोटे-छोटे बच्चे रहते हैं, उनके चोरी होने की भी आशंका रहती है और कई जगह यह देखा भी गया है।

**श्री सभापति:** आपका सवाल क्या है?

**श्रीमती कान्ता कर्दम:** सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि हमारी जो बहन, बेटियां रेलवे स्टेशनों पर मजबूरी में रात बिताती हैं, उनके लिए आपने क्या इंतजाम किया है, जिससे कि उनके साथ कोई दुर्घटना न हो?

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I understand the concern expressed by the hon. Member regarding women. But, almost all the stations are having special rooms especially for women. So, even if there is any problem, the Station Master is there, the Railway police is there, and the GRP is also there. So, they need not worry. If they have any specific complaint, we will take that up. But, at all the stations, we have made special rooms available for women and all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

SHRI MANAS RANJAN BHUNIA: Sir, the hon. Minister in his reply has written, 'No, Sir'. That means, there will be no privatisation or no corporatisation. In the second line, it is mentioned, "However, there is a proposal to outsource the commercial and on board services of a few trains and also to permit, I repeat, also to permit private players to induct modern rakes to run trains on select routes with an objective to provide improved service delivery to passengers." My specific question is this. You just clarify this. Don't mislead the House and the Members. The language terminology is different — 'privatisation' and 'corporatisation'. Are you doing both of it?

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: Sir, the hon. Member has got confused. We are providing only commercial and on board services. The ownership lies with Railways only. We are not transferring any ownership rights to any private people.

SHRI MANAS RANJAN BHUNIA: I am asking about rakes.

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: No, no. That is only permit. It is only licensing. It is only for providing better services to passengers. They are bringing in new rakes. *..(Interruptions)..*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, no comments.

SHRI ANGADI SURESH CHANNABASAPPA: The entire controlling will be done by the Indian Railways, plus the rolling stock people. Members need not worry about that. We are not going for any privatisation.

SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL: Sir, may I just clarify?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Cabinet Minister wants to say something.

SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL: Sir, I think it will be good that we all appreciate what the intention behind this is. As per our estimate, the Railways require about ₹50,00,000 crores in the next 12 years. Every day, Members come to me with new demands,

requirement of new lines, better services, quality of services, etc. Madam has raised a very valid point and I would like to respond to it. We all know that it is not possible for the Government of India to provide ₹50,00,000 crores in the next 12 years due to Budgetary constraints. Despite that, we have almost made two-and-a half times more investment in the Railways, due to which there have been significant charges and some of it, you can feel, are like on cleanliness, quality of rakes, quality service, etc. People say that there is waiting in trains, if you want to meet the assenger rush, new facilities and a large quantity of new rakes will be required.

Now, if there are private parties who are willing to invest and operate on the existing system, which will always continue to be owned by the Indian Railways, then, I think, it is something which consumers and passengers will benefit from. Our intention is to give better service and benefits, not at all to privatize the Indian-Railways. Indian Railways is and will always continue to be the property of the people of India. The intention of the Government is to provide at best, new facilities, new services, giving better quality is what the intention of the Government is. *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. *...(Interruptions)...* Please. We had combined them together. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI MANAS RANJAN BHUNIA: Sir, my second supplementary. *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had combined them together. So, now, Question No. 65.

#### **Linking of MGNREGA wages to inflation**

65. SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the constraints that the Ministry is facing to link MGNREGA wages to inflation so that labour would get hiked wages every year;

(b) whether any consultations in this regard have been held with the Finance Ministry;

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor:

(d) whether it is a fact that wages recommended by the Committee of Ministry of Labour and Employment for MGNREGA workers is ₹ 375/day whereas the Ministry fixed it at only ₹ 178.44/day; and