

Fourteenth Loksabha**Session : 6****Date : 14-12-2005**

Participants : [Krishnadas Shri N.N., Kurup Shri Suresh, Prabhu Shri Suresh, Radhakrishnan Shri Varkala, Swain Shri M.A. Kharabela, Thomas Shri P.C., Varma Shri Ratilal Kalidas, Chandrappan Shri C.K., Yadav Shri Ram Kripal, Kumar Shri Shailendra, Reddy Shri Suravaram Sudhakar, Velu Shri R., Karunakaran Shri P.](#)

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Title : Discussion on the points arising out of the Answer Question No. 423 regarding 'Train Accidents'.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN Sir, in reply to an Unstarred Question No. 483 on 24.11.05, the hon. Minister of Railways has given a statement in this House. The statement is with regard to the number of accidents in the Railways during the period from 1.7.05 to 31.10.05. It means only three months' duration.

17.31 hrs.**(Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey *in the Chair*)**

But when we go to the details of this statement, we get really shocking reports. Within these three months, there were 78 accidents. Two of them were collisions; 48 were derailments; 22 were level crossing accidents; four were due to fire and two were due to other reasons. In these accidents 176 innocent people were killed; 271 people were injured. It is reported that no compensation has been paid to them till now. Though an Inquiry has been ordered, no report has come yet. When we go back and recollect the number of accidents that had occurred in the Indian Railways over the years, we just cannot imagine the number of people who had lost their lives and the number of people who were injured. We cannot imagine their sufferings. The nation and the Railways have lost crores of rupees. So, I think, it is high time to think of how to prevent the accidents and their real causes.

It is stated that safety is the prime concern of the Indian railways. It should not be a mere statement because the Railways charge a special fee from the passengers as Railway Safety Fund. All the passengers, whether they are second class passengers or First Class passengers or AC passengers, have to pay a special fee. It is assumed that this Special Fund is used for the safety of the Railways.

When we go through the details of the nature of the accidents, we see that within these three months, 22 accidents were in connection with the unmanned level crossings.

SHRI SURESH PRABHAKAR PRABHU Sir, two months from now, we will be considering the Budget for the full year when we will be again looking at the financial situation of the country. The Fiscal Responsibility Act which was passed by the Parliament obliges the Finance Minister to place before the House, I think once a quarter, the fiscal situation as it exists at the end of that quarter. He is supposed to report to the House as to how the finances are faring as against what was projected in the Budget and whether the fiscal deficit as projected is going to remain at a level at which it was projected or it is going to be more or less than that. He should also report the position of the public debt of the Government. I think, alongwith the Supplementary Demands for Grants, it is really necessary that we should also discuss all these issues.

MR. CHAIRMAN Shri Prabhu, you may continue later. We are now going to take up Half-an-hour discussion.

SHRI KHARBELA SWAIN Sir, are we going to take up this debate again today or this is the end of it?

(u3/1730/rbn/nsh)

Sir, after Half-an-Hour discussion, will you take up 'Zero Hour' or the debate will continue?

MR. CHAIRMAN No 'Zero Hour'. After Half-an-Hour discussion, the debate on Supplementary Demands for Grants (General) will continue.

During the discussions on the Railway Budget and the Supplementary Demands for Grants, we have been pointing out about the construction of ROBs and FOBs, manned and unmanned level crossings. No doubt Indian Railway has a very big network. Maybe

one of the best in the world also. In the last five or six years the number of trains have increased; the frequency of trains has increased and new routes have also increased. In accordance with the increase in new rail lines and trains, the Government should make it clear whether it is able to make infrastructure facilities available. That is one of the main reasons for the consistent accidents that we are seeing in our country[r97].

So, according to an estimation, every week, six accidents take place in the Indian Railways. It means, every day, there is an accident. We do not know whether it is due to derailing or due to manned or unmanned gates or due to the negligence of the railway staff. There are a number of Committees that the Government has appointed for the inquiry. Sometimes, some actions are taken. But again, we see in this year itself, there have been accidents in Andhra and in other States also. We had the accidents in Kerala 2 or 3 years back. We have witnessed the experience of these accidents in almost all the States. Though we collect the Railway Safety Fund, we are unable to use it for the purpose it is meant. What is the use of it when we are not able to take use of it? In Railways, a very big public undertaking, lakhs of people are working. A majority of people is using it for transport facility. But, we are failing. I do not think in the whole world or anywhere, there is such an accident in the Railways. When we have modern technology or when we can use modern equipment and sophisticated instruments, why are the Railways unable to prevent such accidents? Almost all the year, we have seen these things.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister how many posts are vacant in the Indian Railways. I think, thousands of posts are vacant. Sometimes, we talk about the negligence of the drivers or the Station Masters or of any other person. A new policy of privatization is going on in the Railways also. We see the staff work continuously for 18 hours or 24 hours. How can they work? It is not possible for the drivers or any other person to work such long hours. May I know from the hon. Minister the present situation of the staff strength in the Railways in all the Divisions? What is really the shortage of staff in the Railways? If there is a shortage, why are we not able to fulfil these vacancies?

As I am a Member of IT Committee, I have experienced that in almost all the Departments like the Department of Posts & Telegraph, the Railways, or any public

undertaking, there are a number of posts vacant because we have decided a cut of 10 per cent. We have taken a decision in regard to almost all the Departments. But, this is with regard to the question of life of the passengers and the people. So, this issue is very important. What is the total staff strength percentage-wise? What is the total shortage of staff now in the Railways?

One of the most important issues is about the doubling work. It is true that we demand more trains and more routes but without completing the doubling work of the routes, it is not possible to have a better railway system in our country. So, the Railways has to take up a time-bound programme in this case. This is a very important issue.

The other is about the construction of ROBs and FOBs. In the last Budget, a number of ROBs were included not only in my State but also in almost all the States. But we see that no work has started in many cases. As a result of this, there were some 22 accidents within three months due to manned or unmanned gates. There are provisions for the construction of ROBs and FOBs. But, it has not been done. I do not think it is due to lack of funds because the Railway Minister, in the last Session, proudly declared that the Railways is running in profit, a profit of Rs.10,000 crore. If that is so, then why is the delay? What is the reason for delay in the construction of these ROBs and FOBs? The Ministry has to make it clear and should draw a time-bound programme to complete these ROBs. That is true in the case of the railway station, the FOBs and also other signals systems. In many railway stations, old systems are prevailing[mks98]. In many railway stations, we have no adequate staff and other amenities. So, when we say about the accidents, firstly, we think about negligence of the railway staff. It is true that laziness is there on the part of many of the railway staff. They are not coming in time and they are not present in the place. That is also one of the reasons. What is the action that the Railways have taken especially in three months? I do not go into the past history. I have the records in my hands obtained from the Library. They are about the history of the accidents of the railway from 1960 onwards. It is a big bundle of a book that we can collect. But we cannot go into it because this is the question of the lives of the people. They are paying while travelling. When the passengers are travelling in a train, they are spending money and also they are losing their lives! This is what has happened. So, I want to get a clarification from the hon. Minister. How can we prevent the accidents? What are the measures that the Railways have taken for immediate action with regard to this issue?

With these words, I conclude.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN Sir, I fully endorse the views expressed by the hon. Member Shri Karunakaran. But I must point out that the railway accidents are on the increase due to various reasons. The hon. Railway Minister will admit that it is due to human failure. Whatever might be the reason, the reality is that the accidents are on the increase. So, I would request the hon. Minister to take immediate steps to prevent such occurrence of accidents in future. But it is on the increase. For that, as pointed out by the hon. Member Shri Karunakaran, the doubling process will have to be expedited. But it is still going on in a slow pace. The single-line is excessively used causing derailments every now and then. So, this can be prevented if we expedite the process of doubling the railway line in many places including Kerala.

If I put it at this juncture, the Mangalore-Shoranur line for doubling is taking years together. So, I would request my friend Shri Velu, who is conversant with the subject, to expedite it. I must also congratulate him for getting the Salem Division.... *(Interruptions)* It is a long-standing aspiration of our Tamil brethren. It is all right. At the same time, I would request him to see that nothing happened to the Palakkad Division. It must be maintained as it is, at any rate. The doubling process should continue.... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI S.K. KHARVENTHAN (PALANI) No accident will happen in respect of the Palakkad Division!... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN I hope the emergence of the Salem Division will prevent occurrence of accidents in future because it is a decentralisation process. So also, the Palakkad Division must be maintained. It should be the same as it is now.

With these words, I would request the hon. Minister to take immediate steps to prevent the railway accidents in future.

SHRI C.K. CHANDRAPPAN Sir, as the initiator of the discussion told, we all know that at least in the State of Kerala, all the major accidents of recent period took place on weak railway bridges. For example, there was an accident in Quilon. Now, I am not speaking of any recent accidents. I am speaking of the Kadalundi and Peruman accidents.

The point is that the weak bridge collapses and the train goes down the river. There are a number of weak bridges in Kerala according to the statement made then by the Government. But hardly any step has so far been taken to strengthen those weak bridges in Kerala. If you remember again, the major accidents, in which many people died, took place in Kerala when marriage parties or students going on picnic. While passing through level crossings accidents took place.

Sir, 30 – 40 people died at one incident. Then the demand grows for ROBs. Now, the ROBs situation in Kerala is pretty miserable. I think, the Minister will understand a Malayalam proverb which is there. The Finance Minister will also understand it.

“Rameshwarthe Kshawaram Pole ”

It is like the barbering at Rameshwaram because a large number of devotees will come to cut their hair. The barber will cut one portion of a man’s hair and leave him there and move and cut the same way other person’s hair. Hundreds of people would remain there with little hair cut, but it is never completed. ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI S.K. KHARVENTHAN That happens only in Tirupati ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI C.K. CHANDRAPPAN Let us not quarrel on that. I agree it is in Tirupati.

MR. CHAIRMAN Mr. Chandrappan, you know the rule. Kindly ask the question.

SHRI C.K. CHANDRAPPAN I know the rule. I am only saying that the ROBs should not be constructed in that fashion. Finish all the ROBs in Kerala which have to be completed by constructing the spans over the rail lines. Across the Railways in many cases the spans are not completed by the Railways and the ROBs are pending for completion. If they are constructed one after another, dozens of ROBs in Kerala can be completed. Will you take action so that such accidents can be prevented and many ROBs completed ?

SHRI SURESH KURUP (KOTTAYAM): Sir, one strange thing about the accidents are ... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (BALASORE): Let us come out of Kerala.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is not the rule. There is system of balloting.

SHRI SURESH KURUP Sir, we do not find any disciplinary action taken by the Railways against those officers who are concerned for dereliction of duty. I would like to know in all these accidents what disciplinary action has been taken by the Railways against these officers?

I would also like to know from the Minister that is it a fact that this loco-running staff is forced to overwork. Recently, there is a report from Kolkata. Sir, two engine drivers were forced to work for some 14 or 15 hours. After that they said: "We are not able to continue work, so we are going out." For that disciplinary action has been taken against these engine drivers. So I would like to know whether there is a shortage of loco-running staff. Whether there is a shortage of maintenance staff which is one of the basic causes of these accidents?

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN How do the problems of overshooting the red light signals, specifically, during the foggy nights is to be resolved? It is because this is one of the causes for accidents. In the Konkan Railway, land sliding is a common phenomenon which leads to accidents. What has the Railway done to sort out this problem? How to strengthen these bridges which get washed away during the time of the flood causing severe accidents? The hot axle, the fractured rails are also the technical reasons for causing accidents. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the steps taken in this regard. Most of the accidents do take place, just like the hon. Members from Kerala said, at the level crossings, specifically, the unmanned level crossings. So what steps are being taken by the Railways in this regard? How has the Government utilised the Accidents Reserve Fund? During the time of the NDA Government, the fund was created. ... *(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Shailendra Kumar.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : I have one last point, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put straight question please.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : Yes, Sir, I am asking straight question. Two solutions are there for this. One is this route relay interlocking and the anti-collision device. Those are to be introduced in the railway engines, in the trains. What are the steps that the Government has taken in this regard?[\[a99\]](#)

श्री शैलेन्द्र कुमार माननीय सभापति महोदय, श्री पी. करुणाकरन द्वारा रेल दुर्घटनाओं के बारे में तारांकित प्रश्न के संदर्भ में आधे घंटे की चर्चा में आपने मुझे बोलने का मौका दिया, उसके लिए मैं आपका आभारी हूँ। इस चर्चा में भाग लेने वाले सब माननीय सदस्यों ने अपने विचारों को यहां रखा है और कहा है कि ज्यादातर दुर्घटनाएं मानव रहित फाटकों पर होती हैं। लेकिन बहुत से ऐसे फाटक हैं, जो आटोमैटिक हैं, वहां 20-20 मिनट या आधा-आधा घंटा तक जाम लगा रहता है। परिणामस्वरूप साइकिल वाले, स्कूटर या मोटरसाइकिल वाले फाटक के नीचे से जाने की कोशिश करते हैं और कई बार इससे भी दुर्घटना होती है, जिसमें लोग मारे भी जाते हैं। इसलिए ऐसी जगहों पर फ्लाईओवर ब्रिज बनाने का प्रावधान किया गया है। मैंने रेलवे की अनुपूरक अनुदानों की मांगों पर चर्चा में भाग लेते हुए कहा था कि इस तरह के फ्लाईओवर ब्रिजेज़ की व्यवस्था राष्ट्रीय सम विकास योजना, अन्य योजना या राज्य सरकार द्वारा स्वीकृत पैसे से शीघ्र की जाए, ताकि इस तरह की दुर्घटनाओं की रोकथाम हो सके।

SHRI P.C. THOMAS Mr. Chairman, Sir, it was pointed out that lack of staff is a major issue in the Railways. There are cases where even bare minimum staff is not there in some railway stations. I have an example to quote here. There is one small railway station in a place called Kanjiramattom in Ernakulam district of Kerala. Three persons were working there earlier. Now, two are not there and there is only one person left. He is overloaded with work. He is working for 16 hours in a day. He says that he does not want to work there and he is also going. Instead of appointing new staff, the Railway is planning to close down the station as such so that the problem of staff shortage can be overcome. The station should not be closed because it will increase the number of accidents and likewise, all the small stations may be closed down one day. I talked to the Railway officials and they assured me that that station would not be closed and they are planning to give to private people. That also should not be done because it is a question of safety of passengers. If proper staff is not there, if the minimum number of people required to show

the signal etc. are not there, I think, it will not only affect the small stations, but it will affect the Indian Railways as a whole.

So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether this will be attended to immediately.

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to associate myself with the concerns expressed by other hon. Members regarding the question of safety of the Railways.

Sir, as pointed out by some hon. Members here, there is acute shortage of operating staff in the Indian Railways. So, I would like to know whether the Government have made any proper study to standardise the ratio of development along with the growth of adequate staff in the Indian Railways. This is a very pertinent question. Again, in the development area, some other hon. Members have pointed out here about construction of ROBs and doubling of new railway lines. This is also very important.

Then, I would also like to congratulate the hon. Minister, especially Mr. Velu because Tamil Nadu is getting a new Railway Division at Salem. We are also very happy because a new Railway Division is being created in the Southern Railway and it will give scope for employing more people. There is a news item that is coming up these days stating that the existing Palghat Railway Division is going to be closed down. This is also connected with the safety of railways. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether that news report is true or not.

These are the two pertinent questions that I would like to ask from the hon. Minister [\[k100\]](#).

SHRI SURAVARAM SUDHAKAR REDDY Thank you Sir. I share my concern with my hon. colleagues who have expressed their views about the Railways safety. Only last month, unfortunately, there was a big accident in Nalgonda parliamentary constituency in which 160 people died.

Of course, there are several reasons that very outdated bridges are there, and culverts are very old, etc.. But here in this case, because of the unprecedented rains, several tanks got breached in, a very big flow of water came and the whole culverts along with the Railways line were washed away and many peopled died. But I would like to point out here that for the last two days before the accident, there was a big flow of water on the national highway between Hyderabad and Vijayawada and the entire traffic was stopped. It has come in all the media. The incident happened only ten kilometres from the national highway. I would like to know why the Railways did not foresee that such a disaster could be possible. I would also like to know that if they had known this, what preventive measures they had taken.

श्री रतिलाल कालीदास वर्मा सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से एक छोटा सा प्रश्न पूछना चाहता हूँ कि नगरपालिका के अंदर छोटे-मोटे पुल को बड़ा करने के लिए संसद सदस्य अपनी ग्रांट में से पैसा देते हैं, लेकिन रेलवे की ओर से त्वरित काम न होने के कारण, जो एमपीलैड की ग्रांट है, वह यूज नहीं हो पाती है और स्टेट से सर्टीफिकेट यहां नहीं आ पाता है तथा सर्टीफिकेट न आने के कारण जो एक्सट्रा फंड रिलीज होना चाहिए, वह रिलीज नहीं हो पाता है। गुजरात के अहमदाबाद जिले के बावला शहर के एक ब्रिज का 3 सालों से काम चल रहा है। वहां 15 लाख रूपए जमा हैं। दूसरे 15 लाख रूपए मैं देने के लिए तैयार हूँ। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा कि क्या इस ब्रिज के निर्माण की कार्यवाही शीघ्र ही पूरी की जाएगी अथवा कार्य शुरू किया जा सकेगा?

श्री राम कृपाल यादव माननीय सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि मेरे संसदीय क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत दो ऐसे प्वाइंट्स हैं, जहां आम तौर पर दुर्घटनाएं हो रही हैं। मैंने कई बार सदन के माध्यम से भी माननीय मंत्री जी का ध्यान आकृष्ट किया है और पत्र लिखकर भी ध्यान आकृष्ट किया है। एक पुनपुन परसवा स्टेशन है, वहां क्वातपुर जगह है, जहां लगातार 4-5 एक्सीडेंट हुए हैं, इसलिए वहां फाटक लगाने की आवश्यकता है। दोनों तरफ गांव हैं, मगर वहां फाटक नहीं है। लोग आमतौर पर वहां से गुजरेंगे, क्योंकि वहां आवाम है। वहां फाटक लगाने के लिए आप कौन सी कार्यवाही करेंगे? उस जगह का नाम स्टेशन हितवापुर है।

दूसरी बात, मैं मीठापुर ओवरब्रिज के बारे में कहना चाहता हूँ। पटना शहर में मीठापुर एक महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है, जहां रेलवे का काम हो रहा है। वहां अभी तक पुल का काम पूरा नहीं हो पाया है, जिसकी वजह से लोगों को कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। मजबूरी में लोग रेलवे लाइन क्रॉस करके जा रहे हैं, जिसकी वजह से भी आएदिन दुर्घनाएं होती रहती हैं। मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री जी का ध्यान आकृष्ट कराना चाहूंगा कि जो

मीठापुर में ओवरब्रिज का काम अधूरा है, उसे पूरा करने के लिए और एतमादपुर में जो क्रॉसिंग है, वहां फाटक लगाने के लिए, इन दोनों ही जगहों पर आवश्यक कार्यवाही हो, वह की जाए।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): Sir, I am happy that the hon. Members in the House are having keen interest in the Railways, more especially on the safety so that the accidents are minimised, if not totally removed from the scene.

Shri Karunakaran raised very valid points regarding compensation. Sir, compensation is totally different from *ex-gratia*. He said, 'no amount has been paid and no succour has reached the people'. For the kind information of the hon. Member, Shri Karunakaran, I may say that out of the 176 people killed, 30 relate to the unmanned level crossings, who are not at all eligible for this amount because this is not the responsibility of the Railways because they were the road users and got themselves killed there. So, it is not our responsibility.

On the other hand, we have 146 people who are eligible for *ex-gratia*[\[r101\]](#).

18.00[\[r102\]](#) hrs.

We have paid 133 people to the extent of Rs.1,21,95000. It is not true that no help or no assistance was given. Compensation is totally different. Compensation would mean that you have to necessarily file a claim before the Railway Claims Tribunal (RCT) where one year is allowed to the claimant. On the other hand, the Railways do extend their arm to them to see that their applications are given to them; they get those particulars and pass them on to the Railway Claims Tribunal. Once they file it, within a period of one month, the Railways do give the statements to them, and we do not have any control in the sense that it is a quasi-judicial body. Later on, when the decree is passed, within 15 day's time, without going to the Associate Finance we pay the money. It would mean that we have got great concern for the people who are either killed or injured. It is a matter for information to the hon. Member, Shri P. Karunakaran.

In the same way, out of 271 people injured, 31 relate to the unmanned level crossing and the balance of 240 were eligible. We have given to the 223 people Rs.16,34,000 which would mean that we have disbursed Rs.1,38,29,000 in all these cases. In fact the balance of cases 10 persons (deaths) have not been identified; 3 (deaths) were not admissible cases out of remaining injured persons 11 have not claimed, 2 persons could not be paid due to incomplete address and other four were not admissible cases. These are all few cases which are left out.

Coming to the point that in these cases only 50 people have filed claims in the cases of death, and 22 people have filed the claims in the cases of injury before the RCT. You have also raised the point to say why accidents are on increase. For your kind information I can tell you that the number of accidents has drastically come down from 351 in 2002-03 to 234 during the year 2004-05. It would mean that it has not at all increased because accidents are again fortuitous. We have no control over them except where it is a human failure. But, I would like to mention that we have taken all necessary steps. In fact there is a non-lapsable Special Railway Safety Fund to the extent of Rs.17,000 crore. We are going to spend it for two more years. We have already spent more than Rs. 12,000 crore. We have upgraded the tracks, we have repaired and reconditioned the bridges because one of the hon. Members mentioned that in Kerala most of the accidents do occur in the bridges. We have taken into consideration the condition of bridges and re-evaluated each of them and done these kinds of repairs and renewals. So, this Fund has come as a God-sent amount for all of us to see that the rolling stock and infrastructure got upgraded and so the accidents come down.

SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH Mr. Chairman, Sir, he is looking at that side and not looking towards the Chair. He should address the Chair.

SHRI R. VELU I am thankful to the hon. Member. It is so because most of the questions gravitated towards that side.

MR. CHAIRMAN The hon. Member is right. You should address the Chair.

... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI R.VELU: From now onwards, I will only look at you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kindly conclude.

... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI R. VELU: Even in the developed countries safety index is between 0.4 and 1. Where do we stand in India? We stand really on 0.4 in terms of the safety index. It would mean that we are no less. If we compare the conditions and parameters, we find that we are 0.4 only in safety index. It would mean that – it is not that I am boasting – we have brought down the number of accidents so that we cannot rest assured or be complacent about that.[\[r103\]](#)

Even one accident or one death is a concern. It is an invaluable life. Is it not? So, I want to drive at the point that ours is better when we compare the world standards in terms of safety index.

Coming to the other point, which was mentioned by our friends, regarding the negligence of the driver, more than 50 per cent of the accidents do occur on account of the failure of the railway staff. I agree but then we have 300 training institutions today in the country. We have got two lakhs of people trained in them mostly of the safety staff to see that they work with the kind of motivation and ensure the kind of works to be done when they are at the operation. All this is taken into consideration so that the drivers are properly trained to see that they do not contribute to this kind of accident in future.

He also mentioned about private participation. Well, we have opened the gate of the railways for the first time for public-private participation. In fact, I need not dilate on the subject. However, I would very briefly say that this has helped a great deal in our freight loading today because we have said, you own your own wagon system, own your own sidings, own your own warehousing and own whatever you want out of the items announced in the railways. Even we have given the BOT facility so that the private participation not only enhances our capacity but also helps to see that better management is also brought into the railway system.

Coming to the staff strength, there was a question raised by all of them. It is because our friends said that in the case of two staff members, one staff is being given. After that, the station is being closed. I do not subscribe to this view. We have never closed any station for that matter. Perhaps, we would have made that station as a halting

station still giving the facility of a railway station there. Therefore, I will assure the hon. Member that we will never close the stations like that.

Coming to the ROBs, there was a mention about this. This is also a very important thing. On the ROB, there are certain pre-conditions, that is, the State Government should agree to close the LC as soon as the ROB is completed. The State Government should agree to provide 50 per cent of the project cost. The State Government should agree to that. ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN The State Government has fully completed the work but at the same time on the side of the railway, the portion above the railway line is not completed in many places. I know it at Bekkal in Kasaragod. Six months back, the PWD has completed its work. It is not only there but it is there in other places also. Though the State Government has completed the work, the portion of the railway is also to be completed.

SHRI R. VELU: I will look into these special cases.

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS In total, 20 ROBs have completed the work on both the sides of the approach roads and the railway portion is only awaiting completion. That is due to some technical problem from the railway side only. In total there are 20 ROBs. You can look into them.

SHRI R. VELU I will look into this. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN No, nothing will go on record.

*(Interruptions) ... **

MR. CHAIRMAN This is not the proper way. No, he is replying.

SHRI R. VELU I will reply to any number of questions from you. I will reply to the point why the State Government should participate. There are reasons for it because the Government of India, out of the diesel cess, is passing on certain percentage to them. This is my first point. Then it is given to all the rural roads. ... (*Interruptions*) Please listen to me.

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS Let him complete.

SHRI R. VELU: They are required to contribute their 50 per cent share whereas we are adding 50 per cent. I may also say it here but the Finance Minister may axe it later on when we send the proposal. I have today Rs.1099 crore, which is the amount available for the ROB construction. Plus, I will have Rs.711 crore this year. This would mean I would have nearly Rs.1800 crore. But where does the problem lie today? Where is the problem? The State Government will have to necessarily do comply with these six or seven items. One is, as I said, they have to provide 50 per cent. Then, as I said, they have to agree to close the level crossing. The third is about acquiring land on both the sides and also evicting the people from encroachment. Then again they have to provide in the Annual Budget that amount required for that construction. ... (*Interruptions*[\[m104\]](#))

MR. CHAIRMAN I am not allowing you.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister, you are not to reply to those questions.

SHRI R. VELU: They have also to approve the General Arrangement Drawing (GAD). They have to necessarily give that. These are the things that are now inhibiting the progress of these ROBs. It is not only in a particular State but also

* Not Recorded.

throughout the country. In over 13 years, I could complete 208 ROBs. This year, I have got 443 ROBs under construction. I have already identified 1,233 level crossings where we have got TVUs, more than one lakh namely, the number of trains multiplied by the

number of vehicles passing there in 24 hours. That would be sanctioned. There is no problem on the Railway side to sanction or to finance such projects. All that is required is the State Government's participation. I would request the hon. Members that to get back to their States and tell the State Governments to kindly cooperate with the Railways to execute these projects.

Similarly, it is rightly said that most of the people die at the unmanned crossings. In the country, now we have about 18,490 unmanned level crossings. Out of them, I have identified 1,018 where I could provide men to man them. This year, I have allotted 365 unmanned level crossings to be manned.

In the last ten years, we have converted 1087 unmanned level crossings to be manned. All unmanned level crossings cannot be manned. I cannot do it because to provide one man at the level crossing, I have to invest Rs.12 lakh as capital cost and on that the recurring cost would be Rs. 3 lakh per year because it will be done in two or three shifts. It is not an easy job to convert all of them. There is a persistent demand from many quarters on this.

Another point raised was that if there are a number of accidents then what are we doing? In this regard, we have laid down some norms to man the level crossings. In these cases, we have also stated that if there are more than three accidents at an unmanned level crossing in three years then definitely we will consider that case. We cannot leave those unmanned level crossings high and dry. We will definitely take into consideration these cases and those unmanned level crossings would be brought under manned.

Another point raised was about shortage of staff. An hon. Member asked as to whether any study has been conducted in this regard or not. Many committees have gone into this aspect. They have been insisting that there is over-staffing. We were having more than 20 lakh employees. It has been brought down to 14 lakh. Still we have to downsize because we are increasing mechanization of our Railway system. We are looking at it even from the angles of computerization of Railway reservation system, good maintenance, safety norms, etc. so that there will be more throughput enhancement. Because of this, the time taken for the maintenance will be reduced.

Now, I will mention about the number of staff, the staff that is required for maintenance. The total number of running staff required from safety point of view is 94,574 and the number of vacancies are 13,299. This would mean that there are 14 per cent vacancies. This 14 per cent vacancies in the running staff will be taken care of from the overall of 30 per cent reserve available. This will take care of leave vacancies, resignation, or for that matter, the retirement vacancies, etc. All these are included in the 30 per cent as I said. The buffer is built in. These 14 per cent vacancies in the running staff, on the face of it, would look on very high side. But it is definitely taken care of. On that score, we never stopped or detained any train.

An hon. Member has said about the shortage of staff at the railway stations. That may be marginal. But on the safety aspect we do not compromise in terms of staff members who are required for this purpose. An hon. Member asked about the total number of vacancies in the entire Railways. We have only 1,86,000 vacancies out of the sanctioned strength of 14,11,000 as I mentioned earlier. Out of these, the total strength for safety is 6,46,000 and of these 87,000 vacancies are there. I mentioned about the details of shortage of staff in the running staff etc. So, this is how we are managing. The manpower planning in the Railways is really on a sound footing and on that ground we need not worry about it.

Our friend, hon. Member, Shri Kharabela Swain was making very valid points. He asked what are we doing about the foggy situation in view of the point that a couple of major accidents occurred due to the foggy situation. We are trying to work it out. The RDSO is working on that. I may mention that so far no technology is available to deal with such situations. They have not found an answer as to how to get over this foggy situation. The R&D work is going on in this respect. We have got many methods one is of having more line protected by use of detonators etc. All these things are being taken care of.

A mention was also made about the accidents in KRCL. When one of the accidents happened there, the hon. Minister of Railways, me and my colleague here – we all visited the accident spot. After visiting the spot of the last accident, we have made very concrete arrangement to see that there would be no falling of boulders or there will be

loose soil etc. We have taken care of all these things unmindful of the cost involved there. We hope that in future at least this will not happen.

A mention was also made about the bridges being washed away. You know what has happened in Nalgonda recently. Our friend said about it. Even in the month of August there was a inspection of the place by the Irrigation staff of the area. In that case, we are now strengthening the patrolling of the lines in vulnerable locations in heavy rains. I am writing to some of the States specially as to how to coordinate with our staff in cases of joint inspections so that such type of things do not happen.

A mention was also made about the accidents at the level-crossings. I said about the measures taken. About the human failure, and disciplining etc. I do not have the figures right now. I can tell you very emphatically no staff member is spared in that sense. We know that more than 50 per cent of the accidents are because of the failure of the railway staff. Action has been taken in many cases, many of them have been removed from service or dismissed from service or demoted etc. This type of action is happening in the Railways. I can assure the hon. Member that I will communicate the exact figures which he wanted to know.

There was a mention about overtime and the working hours of the drivers. Normally the rule is that the running time is only 12 hours out of which ten hours are real running time and two hours are for preparatory and complementary works. Whenever it exceeds that, 13 hours or more, we give a notice to them. If it exceeds 13 hours of duty, then it is only because of the question of breakdown etc. But 93 per cent of the duty hours of the running staff is covered less than 13 hours. I am assuring you that much. In 93 per cent of the trips the duty hours are less than 13 hours. To that extent we will not allow them to do more work because we know of the human fatigue which may result in failures.

Sir, a point was made about the anti-collision device. We have already taken care of this. In the North-East we have taken about 1,700 kilometres for this ACD and it has been fine-tuned by June. But some more problems are there. In KCRL now they are doing it. In the same way in Southern Railway, South Western Railway, South Central Railway and Northern Railway, in the four zones, they are also going to implement the similar

route kilometres. This would mean that we are taking every step to see that ACD is implemented fully so that the number of accidents is further reduced. We have taken the safety norms as I mentioned and we have taken steps on a grand scale about it [[krr105](#)].

I think, Shri Varkala Radhakrishnan and others mentioned about doubling. These are all ongoing projects. We will definitely do whatever we can.

Then, the example of Tirupati was cited. I have got 240 proposals on my shelf which are all sanctioned projects with cost of about Rs. 47,000 crore, but what I get as my budgetary support or non-budgetary support is very minimal. So, either I should distribute evenly to all the projects or I concentrate on a few projects is a matter of policy which we have to decide. So, I can assure that wherever it is the priority and where it is the last mile project, I will definitely help it.

I think, I have answered most of the questions. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : No, I am not allowing.

(*Interruptions*) ... *

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am not allowing. This is not going on record.

(*Interruptions*) ... *

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, I will answer. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am not allowing.

(*Interruptions*) ... *

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is a Half-an-Hour Discussion. We have taken more than 50 minutes.

... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI R. VELU: The Government has the money. I will definitely see what exactly is there because ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Kurup, I am not allowing. This is a Half-an-Hour Discussion. We have taken more than 50 minutes.

*(Interruptions) ... **

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I am not allowing.

*(Interruptions) ... **

SHRI R. VELU: I answer the question of my friend from Bihar has asked. If the line is more than ten years old and you want a new level-crossing, it cannot be done because the policy is that if the line is less than ten years old, I can consider to put in a new level-crossing. If it is more than ten years old and you want to have it, then you have to bear the entire cost and also the technical feasibility is to be evaluated. To that extent, I will say that if it is more than ten years old route, the new level crossing cannot be done. If you are going in for cent per cent deposit, I will definitely consider it.

The second thing he has asked is that there is slow progress of ROB work. I will get it reviewed and see what is possible. ... (*Interruptions*)

* Not Recorded.

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : What about Palghat Division? ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You may go to the Chamber of the hon. Minister.

... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You know the rules. Nothing more will go on record.

*(Interruptions) ... **

SHRI R. VELU: The hon. Minister had announced yesterday while replying to the debate on Supplementary Demands (Railways) that Salem Division would be created. He did not say that Palghat Division would be closed. It is only a question of reorganisation of the Divisions. The Palghat Division will remain.

* Not Recorded.

[krr1]Fld by b1

[R2]3pages

[reporter3]Contd by D

[ak4]followed by E1

[KMR5]Two pages for printed question and answer

[R6]Cd by f

[R7]cd by g

[R8]cd by h

[k9]Fd by j1.e

[R10]Fld

[R11]fd. by 'l'

[e12] 3pages for written answers

[e13]Folld by n1.e

[r14]followed by O1

[MSOffice15] Cd by p1

[RB16]fd. By q

[R17]cd by q1

[a18]contd. by r1.e

[h19]cd by s

[i20]fld by t1

[r21]Cd. by u1

[m22]fd. by w1

[t23]Followed by x1

[R24]Fd by y

[r25] Cd by z1

[R26]cd by a2

[R27] Shri Rawat cd.

[R28]cd by b2

[R29]cd by c2

[p30]cd. by d2.e

[R31]Cd F2

[R32]fd. by 'g2'

[r33]Cd. By h2

[bru34]Varkala-cd.

[bru35]Cd. By j2

[r36]contd. by K2

[i37]Cd by l2

[rpm38](Cd.by m2)

[\[R39\]](#)n2cd

[\[R40\]](#)n22cd

[\[i41\]](#)cd. by o2

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[\[r43\]](#)Cd. by q2

[\[R44\]](#)cd by r2

[\[t45\]](#)followed by s2

[\[krr46\]](#)Contd by t2

[\[reporter47\]](#)contd by U2

[\[ak48\]](#)cd.. by W2

[\[R49\]](#)cd x2

[\[MSOffice50\]](#) cd by y2

[\[RB51\]](#)Cd. By z2

[\[bru53\]](#)Cd. By b3

[\[r54\]](#)contd. by C3

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[\[R56\]](#)cd by e3

[\[a57\]](#)contd. by f3.e

[\[r58\]](#) Cd by g3

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[\[c60\]](#)Cont by l3.h

[\[R61\]](#)cd m3

[\[reporter62\]](#) Contd by N3

[\[ak63\]](#) cd.. by O3

[\[R64\]](#) Sh bansgopal choudhary cd

[\[R65\]](#) cd by p3

[\[p66\]](#) cd. by q3.e

[\[i67\]](#) Cd. by r3

[\[rpm68\]](#) (Cd.by s3)

[\[R69\]](#) t3cd

[\[bru70\]](#) Cd. By u3

[\[reporter71\]](#) contd by G4

[\[ak72\]](#) cd.. by H4

[\[KMR73\]](#) fd by j4

[\[R74\]](#) K4cd

[\[R75\]](#) Cd by m4

[\[R76\]](#) cd. by 'n4'

[\[r77\]](#) cd. By o4

[\[bru78\]](#) Swain-cd.

[\[bru79\]](#) Cd. By p4

[\[r80\]](#) contd. by Q4

[\[mks81\]](#) cd. by r4.

[\[R82\]](#) cd by s4

[\[a83\]](#) contd. by t4.e

[k84](Cd. by u4)

[r85]Chandrappan ctd

[r86]W4

[h87]Cd by x4

[i88]cd. by y4

[r89]a5cd

[reporter90]Contd by B5

[ak91]Shri K. Yerrannaidu cd..

[ak92]cd.. by C5

[KMR93]cd by d5

[R94]cd by e5

[R95]cd. by g5

[c96]contd by h1.h

[r97]contd. by W3

[mks98] cd. by x3.

[a99]followed by z3.e

[k100](Fd. by a4)

[r101]Ctd by b4

[r102] Shri R. Velu cd.

[r103]cd. by c4

[m104]fd. by d4

[\[kr105\]](#) conjtd by f4