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Title : Need to restore the telescopic benefit on fares for long journeys involving more than one train.

SHRI P. MOHAN (MADURAI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister of Railways Shri Lalu Prasad, in his Railway Budget, claimed that there is no increase in passenger fares. But from April last, telescopic fares have been withdrawn abruptly causing great inconvenience and additional financial burden to long distance passengers.

For instance, if we are to go from New Delhi to my constituency, Madurai, normally we have to take two trains, one from Delhi to Chennai and another from Chennai to Madurai. The fare between New Delhi and Madurai inclusive of reservation charges used to be Rs. 587 only under telescopic fares. Now, passengers have to shell out Rs. 537 to travel between Delhi and Chennai and they have to pay an additional amount of Rs. 240 to travel between Chennai and Madurai. Thus, what was Rs. 587 has now become Rs. 777. This is an increase in passenger charges to the tune of about 35 per cent. Earlier on, reservation charge was only Rs. 20 for both the sectors. Now, an additional Rs. 10 has to be paid. Thus Rs. 200/- collected more from the passengers.

Without any budget proposal, that too at a time when we feel proud that we have enacted during the Winter Session of 2005 the Right to Information Act, the Railways have surreptitiously increased the passenger charges neither informing nor taking the approval of Parliament.

Rail passengers came to know of this only when they went to book railway tickets. This is shocking and precarious a situation. This exorbitant fare hike must not go on any further. This increase in charges must be withdrawn immediately. This kind of heavy increase in railway fares and charges must not be imposed through mere executive orders without taking the formal approval of Parliament.

* English translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil.