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Title: Need to complete the gauge conversion work on Bijapur-Gadag railway line in Karnataka by 2005.

SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI (DHARWAD NORTH): Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you. Way back in 1993, widespread gauge conversion work was started. The gauge conversion work between Gadag-Bijapur line, which is of just 300 kms., has not been completed even after eleven years. In 2002, the Government of Karnataka had entered into an agreement to share the cost of the project. Now, it is very unfortunate that because of the non-payment of its share by the Karnataka Government, the gauge conversion work of 300 kms., has not been completed even after eleven years. The South-Western Railway has written a letter to the Government of Karnataka that it is going to shift the conversion materials to some other place since the Government of Karnataka has not paid its share.

That particular Gadag-Bijapur railway line has become a metre gauge railway line. Since the surrounding, all the gauge conversion work has been completed. People are agitating about this. Recently, trains were stopped for six hours in Hubli in order to impress upon the authorities to take up the work immediately. It is going to create a law and order problem also.

So, I urge upon the hon. Railway Minister to take up the work immediately whether the Karnataka Government gives its share or not. Otherwise, the Railways will lose its revenue. This is what I want to request the Government to do.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Now, Shri Varkala Radhakrishnan to speak.