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Title: Need to allocate more funds for gauge conversion of Madurai-Bodi railway line.

SHRI J.M. AARON RASHID (THENI): Sir, please allow me to speak from here.

Sir, Madurai-Bodi Broad Gauge conversion is estimated to cost Rs. 180 crore in 2009-10. In 2010-11, the Railway Ministry has allotted Rs. 15 crore; in 2011-12, they have allotted only Rs. 5 crore. If there is a slow allocation like this, it will take another ten years to complete this.

Sir, in Teni District, Madurai-Bodi is a vulnerable line because in the border areas of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, we are producing cardamom, that is, *elaichi*, plantains, which are supplied all over the world, raw silk, that is, cotton, coconut, coffee and other spices. It is supplied all over India and also to the rest of the world.

Earlier, there were booking stations in Bodi as well as in Teni. Due to gauge conversion, they have been closed. Now, the traders have to take their goods either to Madurai or to Erode, but Madurai and Erode railway officers are asking them to either go to Coimbatore or Chennai. If they have to go to Coimbatore, they have to travel 400 kilometres; if they have to go to Chennai, they have to travel 550 kilometres. It involves transportation by a number of lorries and trucks and other interventions, besides theft taking place on the way. The traders are in tears.

My request is that this gauge conversion work should be taken up on a war-footing and completed. I have already requested the Railway Minister in person about this. Before gauge conversion, I would request the Government of India to open booking centres in Bodi and in the Teni District to facilitate traders. It is a revenue generating business. In a year, 25 lakh tonnes are produced and it goes to all other places. Therefore, I urge upon the Government and also my request to the railway authorities is to intervene and release more funds for this gauge conversion work. It will have to be completed on a war-footing basis in the larger interest of the poor and small traders of my Teni District.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House stands adjourned to meet again on Monday, the 10th December, 2012 at 11.00 a.m.

18.45 hrs

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock

on Monday, December 10, 2012/Agrahayana 19, 1934 (Saka).
