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Title: Need to address the problems of physically challenged STD/PCO booth operators at railway stations including the hassles being faced by such railway passengers in trains.

SHRI RAHUL SHEWALE (MUMBAI SOUTH CENTRAL): I wish to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister of Railways towards the financial hardships faced by Handicapped persons who have been allotted STD/PCO booths on Railway Stations/platforms. Due to vast increase in communication services like mobile etc. the business of STD/PCO booths has gone down heavily. As a result, the handicapped persons who are solely dependent on these services are finding it difficult to make a livelihood. In view of the above, a number of Parliament Members have suggested to the Ministry of Railways for granting permission to STD/PCO booth operators to sell certain items like packed snacks, biscuits, popcorn and drinking water etc. to enable them to supplement their income. No action has been taken so far on this proposal.

I am given to understand that recently the permission for the sale of above said certain items has been granted to the Miscellaneous Articles Contractor vide Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) order No. 2006TG-III/461/3 dated 2 November, 2012. So the benefit can also be given to handicapped STD/PCO booth operators.

I would like to also point out the problem of handicapped passengers being faced by them on Suburban Railway and long distance trains. That the seats/berths reserved for them are being occupied by general passengers. Also the coach reserved for the handicapped persons in local trains is being occupied by general passengers. My request to the Hon'ble Minister is to kindly look into the matter seriously and make arrangement to give relief to the handicapped persons.