

to negotiate their wages and other benefits and now even if there are certain laws for settlement at the State level, even those laws will not be applicable. So, instead of freezing the old Sec. 19, they have tightened Sec. 19. I am sure those in the administration who want to deal with the railway employees with an iron rod and call it an iron discipline, they probably have recommended to him that these changes should be there and, therefore, as a result of that, this entire approach to the of the Bill to take the RPF at the level of the armed forces of the Union itself is a very retrograde step and I will request the hon Minister not to get trapped up in these bureaucratic approaches which are inconsistent with the changes of the modern times. Let him apply his mind and at the introduction stage itself let him withdraw this Bill. Of course, in spite of that, if he introduces the Bill and if the House inadvertently allows the introduction of the Bill, in that case, I will have to fight it tooth and nail at the time of consideration. But I do not want to put the Minister into that trouble and he can save his energy and time and mine also and see that the Bill is withdrawn at the introduction stage itself.

SHRI BANSI LAL : The Railway Protection Force came into existence in 1957 and prior to that it was the Watch & Ward Department of the Railways. When Prof. Dandavate himself was the Railway Minister in 1979, there was some sort of an agitation in the Railway Protection Force. So when you are making it an armed force of the Union—you are now making it an armed force of the Union—and at the same time, if you give them the right of association or union, it is not correct. Prof. Sahab himself had to deal with them at that time when there was an agitation in June 1979. So I do not want that to come back.

So far as their being railway employees is concerned, I would like to remind Prof. Sahab to kindly see Sec. 10 of the Act which says :

“The Inspector-General and every other superior officer and every member of the Force shall for all purposes

be regarded as railway servants within the meaning of the Indian Railways Act, 1980, other than Chapter VIA thereof, and shall be entitled to exercise the powers conferred on railway servants by or under that Act.”

So I think the fears the Professor has in mind are misconceived and an armed force of the Union cannot be given the right of association or union.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : I would like to incidentally remind him that this demand was there also when I was handling the Ministry but I resisted that pressure. Thank God, I resisted, but you please do not succumb to that pressure now.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The question is :

“That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to amend the Railway Protection Force Act, 1957.”

The motion was adopted

SHRI BANSI LAL : I introduce the Bill.

12.48 hrs.

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

[English]

- (i) Need to take measures to ensure speedy trial of cases pending in Supreme Court/High Courts.

SHRI KAMAL NATH (Chhindwara) : There are nearly one crore legal cases pending to-day before the country's courts. Assuming that each case involves 5 people, there are 5 crore citizens seeking justice from courts. According to a survey conducted by the Law Ministry, 60% of the 9 lakh cases pending before the High Courts are more than 2 years old. In the Supreme Court alone there are 45,000 hearing cases pending.

[Shri Kamal Nath]

In many instances the cases involved are revenue matter and delays are beneficial to the wealthy litigants whose unpaid arrears are profitably invested in business denying the State of its benefits.

Based on an estimate approximately Rs. 5,000 crores of Central Government revenues are now blocked because of court delays. The judiciary is a vital arm of the Republic and no democracy can function with its justice dispensation mechanism not operating fast. Unless the Government takes steps to rectify the massive backlog, cases will pile up, people will be denied justice and revenue clearance will lie unsettled.

(ii) **Need to amend the Bonus Act urgently to raise the upper salary limit for the benefit of workers.**

SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR (Quilon) : Sir, the upper salary limit for the eligibility of Bonus even now stands unchanged at Rs. 1,600/- per mensem. Though the limit of one month salary has been enhanced to Rs. 1,600/- from Rs. 750/- in the last Parliament Session through the relevant amendment in the Bonus Act, the upper limit is the same as was fixed in 1965.

The Union Labour Minister has assured that the upper limit for Bonus is also going to be raised considerably or removed.

As far as Kerala is concerned, the season for the disbursement of Bonus is during the Onam festival. This year Onam falls on 27th August, 1985.

Therefore, unless the relevant amendment in the Bonus Act in regard to the upper limit for the eligibility of Bonus is given effect to in the current Session of Parliament, the employees of Kerala will be deprived of this benefit.

It is, therefore, requested that the relevant amendment to the Bonus Act may please be brought by the Government

immediately in the current Session of Parliament itself.

(iii) **Need for immediate reduction in the running time and improvement and upkeep of Katihar-Danapur Express Train.**

SHRI TARIQ ANWAR (Katihar) : Sir, 45 UP and 46 DN Katihar-Danapur Express is a prestigious train. This train was steamed off by our late beloved Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi on 17th October, 1984 in her last Railway function. This train links the important areas of Kosi division with the Bihar State capital Patna through Broad Gauge but the condition of this train is miserable. It takes more than 14 hours to cover a distance of less than 300 kms. There are a large number of unscheduled long stoppages. Besides, the bogies are very old and in very bad shape with no water and electricity in the compartments. Even the 1st class bogies are so dirty and ill maintained that, I find it beyond words to describe.

I have written nearly a couple of dozen letters to the Minister and the Minister of State of Railways for proper maintenance of the aforesaid train and reducing the journey hours. I have also met them in this connection. I had also requested them to provide diesel locomotive for the said train and also to issue directives for reducing the journey hours to 8 hours which is more than enough for a distance of 300 kms. But, it seems that all my requests proved futile and the train is in the same old shape which is a matter of disappointment to the people of my constituency.

Therefore, I request the Minister of Railways to take immediate steps to reduce the journey time and for improvement and upkeep of this important and prestigious train.

(iv) **Need for Central assistance to improve drinking water facilities and other civic amenities in Patna.**

SHRI C.P. THAKUR (Patna) : Sir, Patna though being the Capital of Bihar lacks various civic facilities like—drinking