

to curtail the journey period of Mahalaxmi Express leaving from Kolapur and going to Bombay, which takes normally 22 hours.

MR. SPEAKER: That is a different train and that is a different question. I think we have finished with the questions. Thanks to the absentee Members! If hon. Members want a second round then we will have to take up the questions for the second round. We have got ten minutes left. I have no objection. Go along. Mr. Sudheeran.

**Survey and Expenditure Involved in laying Ernakulam-Alleppey Railway Line**

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\*125. SHRI V. M. SUDHEERAN:  
SHRI M. RAM GOPAL  
REDDY:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Kerala Government has urged Central Government to expedite the sanction of line between Ernakulam and Alleppey;

(b) if so, the total expenditure involved on this line; and

(c) action proposed to be taken by Government about this line?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (PROF. MADHU DANDEVATE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The line from Ernakulam to Alleppey is estimated to cost about Rs. 5 crores.

(c) The question of taking up the construction of the line is under active consideration of the Government in consultation with the Planning Commission.

SHRI V. M. SUDHEERAN: Sir, it is a vital project as far as Kerala is concerned. The State Government has taken a very keen interest in offering government's own land as also wooden sleepers. It has already spent more than Rs. one lakh for the

survey and the people of that area have come forward by offering full manpower to do the unskilled work.

So, may I request the Minister to be pleased to state whether he would give us a definite assurance that the project will be sanctioned and that the work will be started in this year itself?

PROF. MADHU DANDEVATE: Initially when we suggested to the Planning Commission that this particular line should be cleared and we should be permitted to include this in 1977-78 budget, the clearance was not given. Certain developments had since then taken place which had created some work. The original estimated cost was Rs. 5 crores. Because Kerala Government had assured that they would be prepared to give government land free and wooden sleepers also free of charge and in addition, even the earth work might be undertaken to a certain extent, I think the cost would go down from Rs. 5 crores to Rs. 4.55 crores. In the light of these, we are re-examining the proposition. Initially the returns that were indicated appeared to be grossly exaggerated. Again we are trying to go into the feasibility report and are taking up the issue with the Planning Commission. I can assure the hon. Member that if this is cleared, as far as the Ministry is concerned, it is prepared to go ahead with the implementation of the plan for the construction of this line.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR: Sir, in view of the fact that the railway line runs along the coast of Kerala which is the poorest part of the country and, in view of the fact that it touches the port town of Alleppey which is now almost in a bad condition, will the ministry move the file to see that this is expedited? These two factors are very important.

PROF. MADHU DANDEVATE: Sir, that is exactly the reason why at the Minister's level, we have already taken a decision that we should proceed

with this line only in consultation with the Planning Commission. And I have already replied to an earlier question that we would require the Planning Commission's clearance of this line.

**SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:** Sir, the Minister said that the cost would come down to Rs. 4.55 crores for this project. Already everything is available for this 52 k.m. line project with the General Manager for the construction and that will reduce the expenditure further.

The material available with him already is lying idle somewhere in Kerala. Will you take the whole thing into account including the expenditure to be incurred on the rails? The second part of my question is this. Will you please do this yourself without consulting the Planning Commission?

**PROF. MADHU DANAVATE:** Sir, as far as consultation is concerned, we cannot take up the project unless of course we get a clearance from the Planning Commission. So, that question does not arise.

As far as the earlier part of the question is concerned, I have already cleared that point by saying that we have taken all the factors into account by which the original cost of the estimate could be reduced to some extent. That is the reason why we are proceeding with this.

#### SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

#### Tenders invited by O&NGC for purchase of Truck Tractors

S.N.Q. 2. **DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY:** Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Oil, and Natural Gas Commission called for tenders for the purchase of truck tractors;

(b) whether the called tenders were opened on March 3, 1976;

(c) whether the contract for 24 trucks was awarded to Maruti Heavy Vehicles Limited;

(d) whether the price charge by the Maruti Limited was almost twice as high as the lowest tender price; and

(e) whether the contract award was irregular?

**THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMEN-TARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA):** (a) and (b). The ONGC invited tenders on January 16, 1976 for Truck Tractors with opening date of the tenders as March 4, 1976.

(c) The contract for 12 Truck Tractors without oilfield equipment and 2 Truck Tractors with oilfield equipment at a total c.i.f. value of Rs. 73,47,707.00 was placed by the ONGC with the approval of the Government with M/s. Maruti Heavy Vehicles Ltd.

(d) At the time the order was placed, the quotations of M/s. Maruti Heavy Vehicles Ltd., for the said Truck Tractors were the lowest.

(e) The question as to whether there was any irregularity etc., in the award of the contract is presently under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

**DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask in view of the fact that the CBI has been asked to look into this case presumably it means that there is a *prima facie* case. The question is what are the terms of reference? It is clear that these trucks were not manufactured by Maruti but were imported from a foreign company, namely, International Harvester. Secondly, in addition to the price paid by the government, these companies have paid commission to the Maruti Company. Whether this aspect of the matter is also included in the terms of reference made to CBI. Further, I would like to know as to how much commission was paid and where has that commission been deposited?