

RAJYA SABHA

***SUPPLEMENT**

TO

SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Tuesday, December 03, 2024/ Agrahayana 12, 1946 (Saka)

GOVERNMENT BILLS - *Contd.*

(ii) THE BHARATIYA VAYUYAN VIDHEYAK, 2024 - *Contd.*

DR. SYED NASEER HUSSAIN: The name of the Bill should be easily understandable and accessible to everyone. The name of the Bill should be both in English and Hindi. This Bill retains the regulatory structure and most provisions of the previous Act. The agencies, including the DGCA, the BCAS and the AAIB are not new agencies. It remains to be seen how professionally and independently such agencies would be able to function under the direct control of the Union Government. There is also a need to include provisions for establishing independent regulatory bodies with the mandate of ensuring compliance and investigating incidents. Further, provisions may be incorporated which facilitate use of sustainable aviation fuels, green technologies and practices that reduce environmental impact of aviation. A dispute resolution framework needs to be worked out between airlines and passengers and other stakeholders. You can see the Delhi Airport. Rajkot airport, Lucknow airport, Jabalpur airport, all these places have had security incidents. The Ministry does not have its own airport and aircraft. Air fares are increasing for all sectors. Flight prices have increased significantly. More than half of the routes under the 'UDAN' scheme are not operational. There is no clarity about the airports in Purnea, Bhagalpur, Malda and my home district Bellary. Similarly, there is monopoly in the ownership of airports. Niti Aayog had said that no project should be awarded without adequate technical expertise. Very high charges are being levied on the general public at these airports. Since they have been privatized, the charges for all the facilities have increased. This user fee has increased manifold at many airports in India. The reason for its increase is the privatization of all these airports. The Government has talked about privatization of 25 airports and is planning for it. Along with this, there has been talk of giving stake to private companies in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports. It is true that air traffic has increased and the number of airports has also increased but the foundation stone of most of these airports has been laid not by the present Government but by the previous Governments. The Prime Minister says that the common man of the country should get the opportunity to travel by air. But for this, the prices of air tickets should be low. But there is a monopoly of two aviation companies in the field of air travel and of one company in relation to airports. In such a situation, the price of tickets cannot be reduced.

***This Synopsis is not an authoritative record of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.**

SHRI RAGHAV CHADHA: I want to put before the House the plight of the common air passenger of the country through the discussion on this Bill. Today even economy class is no longer economical. The prices of air tickets are skyrocketing. The situation is such that air tickets to many parts of the country are more expensive than international flight tickets. Apart from this, the rates for flights of the same sector, of the same airline, on the same day but at different times are also different. For the development of the country, it is necessary that air travel should be accessible to all and not a luxury. But even today it is a dream for a large number of the people of the country. The management of airports is very poor. The prices of food at airports are double, triple the market price. This should be regulated. There should be provision for canteens at concessional rates at airports. The air connectivity in the country is also very poor. There are no flights to many tourist places and famous cities of the country. Additionally, the common travel is also troubled by flight delays and cancellations. A common citizen sometimes buys expensive air tickets to reach his destination quickly. But does he reach his destination on time? Today, airplanes run three to four hours late from the scheduled time. In case of one kilogram of extra luggage, the flight charges you thousands of rupees as fare, but does the flight compensate us for the delay of several hours? Today, I would like to say to the Hon'ble Minister that you should create such a mechanism that the airline compensates the common passenger for every hour of delay in the flight. Two airlines have 90 percent market share. That is, we have formed a cartel, that they will provide the desired service at the desired price, because there is no competition at all. The Government had brought a scheme called "UDAN" whose expanded form is - Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik, but how can he fly? There are no options to fly, neither are there cheap tickets, nor do flights run on time. You have to wait for a long time at the baggage belt to see when our bag will arrive. The Government should formulate a process to standardize this. Today you give the contract of airport parking to a company and it charges whatever price it likes.

Discussion not concluded.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

1. Demand to fix rates of various treatments and procedures in private hospitals for general public on lines of CGHS

SHRI NARESH BANSAL: There is a huge disparity in the treatment rates of private sector hospitals in the country. A sick person has to pay a huge bill for the expensive treatment in private hospitals, which worsens his financial condition. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of control over the rates of private hospitals. Private hospitals charge arbitrary amounts from patients for treatment. 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana' and 'Ayushman Yojana' have proved to be milestones, which have provided good treatment and relief to the poor. I want to bring to the notice of the Government that the mediclaim companies operating in the country enter into an agreement with these private hospitals for treatment of their policy holders at affordable rates in these hospitals, whose rates are very low. Similar is the case of the rate under CGHS . When small mediclaim companies can get treatment at affordable rates by entering into an agreement with private hospitals, then why does the government not fix rates for private hospitals, on the basis of which the public can get treatment at affordable

rates? I demand from the Government that rates of all items for treatment in private hospitals should be fixed, on the basis of which common citizens can get treatment at cheaper rates from these hospitals.

(Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla , Dr. Sikander Kumar, Dr. John Brittas, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu and Shri Rambhai Harjibhai Mokariya associated.)

2. Demand for establishment of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) Centre in Bihar

SHRI SANJAY KUMAR JHA: Exports of high value agricultural products like Makhana and Litchi from Bihar are growing steadily. Apart from this, Bihar has immense potential for GI tagged agricultural products like Bhagalpuri Shahi Litchi, Jardalu Mango, Katarni Rice and Magahi Paan. Farmers and traders of Bihar currently export agriculture through Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) centre located in Varanasi, but they have to face some difficulties in this process. Patna, Darbhanga and Gaya airports in Bihar are in continuous operation, and soon Purnia airport will also be fully ready. I request the Government to consider setting up of APEDA Centre in Bihar. Setting up of this Centre will boost the export of premium agricultural produce of Bihar like foxnut, Litchi and other GI tagged products. Besides, this Centre will help in value added processing, better training of farmers and strengthening the agricultural economy of Bihar. This will give better recognition to the agriculture sector of the State in global markets and will also increase the income of farmers.

(Dr. John Brittas, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu and Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla associated.)

3. Demand for Green Bonus and Special Package for Sikkim

SHRI DORJEE TSHERING LEPCHA: As the world's mega-biodiversity hotspot, Sikkim harbours 26 per cent of India's biodiversity within just 0.2 per cent of its area. Its 84 glaciers, 534 lakes, and rivers and mountains are crucial for maintaining water cycle and energy security for the nation and beyond. Despite Sikkim's ecosystem services benefiting the nation and the world, it faces opportunity costs from land-use restrictions for conservation, its commitment to Nationally Determined Contributions and Sustainable Development Goals, and bears financial burdens from natural disasters like recent flash floods and GLOF (Glacial Lake Outburst Flood), disproportionately shouldering the cost of maintaining its natural treasure. Therefore, I respectfully request the Government for a Green Bonus and Special Package to help Sikkim manage its financial burden and preserve the nation's vital natural resources.

(Dr. John Brittas, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu, Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla, Shri Chunnilal Garasiya and Shri Devendra Pratap Singh associated.)

4. Concern over Mismatched Skill Development

SHRI NARAIN DASS GUPTA: Population in the age group of 15-59 is likely to reach 65 per cent in the next Census. But the attempt to leverage this demographic advantage is yet to succeed, as the youth are underprepared for industry demands. The employment rate has dipped to 46.8 per cent in second quarter of 2024, indicating a declining job market. While the Government claims India's low corporate tax rate (22 per cent) as a growth driver, this has not translated into job security, as companies continue

laying off staff to prioritize profits, leveraging tax savings without accountability for hiring or job creation. Though some schemes like Skill India, Make in India, Vocal for Local have made some impact, yet it needs further acceleration. The skill development initiatives rolled out by the Government need to be reviewed as studies show that 33 per cent of India's educated youth remain unemployed due to mismatched skills. The current educational curriculum is outdated, and it needs comprehensive national strategy to align it with the evolving demands of industries like technology, green energy and manufacturing. The Government policies should bridge the gap of expected skill-set between the job-givers and the job-seekers. I urge the Government to look into it.

(Shri A.A. Rahim, Dr. John Brittas, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu and Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla associated.)

5. Issue of Mismanagement during Manimahesh Yatra in Himachal Pradesh

DR. SIKANDER KUMAR: Manimahesh is a sacred Hindu pilgrim site, and its pilgrimage starts in the month of August, which is very hard. This pilgrimage site is located in District Chamba, Tehsil Bharmour, Himachal Pradesh. It is also very important for the local people from the point of view of employment. Every year lakhs of devotees come to visit Manimahesh. There is a great lack of essential facilities for the devotees, from medical and health to helicopters, transport, accommodation, toilets and electricity. On the other hand, the problem of traffic jam is also very serious, which can be solved by connecting Hadsar to Sunku Ki Tappri via Thala Chobia, strengthening the bridge of Kou Seri and expanding National Highway 154A. I would like to request the Government of India that keeping in mind the facilities of the devotees coming on the Manimahesh Yatra, essential facilities like medical and health, communication, electricity, helicopters, smooth transport and traffic, accommodation and toilets should be arranged here, and the problem of traffic should also be solved. Just like the Vaishno Devi Shrine Board and Amarnath Shrine Board, a Board should be set up here as well so that the development and management of the place can be done smoothly.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

6. Demand for Increase in the Fellowships for OBC researchers

DR. BHIM SINGH: Under the university system of India, National Fellowships are provided to students of Scheduled Castes for pursuing research through PhD. This class constitutes 16.6 percent of the total population of the country. Two thousand fellowships are provided to this class every year. I want to draw the attention of the Government towards the largest population of the country, which is known as Other Backward Classes (OBC). Currently, only one thousand fellowships are provided every year under the National Fellowship for OBC Students (NFOBC) scheme. It is extremely disappointing to see that there is provision of such few fellowships for the largest population of the country. It is the need of the hour to increase it to at least up to six thousand.

(Dr. Bhagwat Karad, Dr. John Brittas, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu and Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla associated)

7. Urgent Need for Addressing Train Sabotage and Anti-national Activities

SHRI LAHAR SINGH SIROYA: The alarming rise in attempts to derail trains across the country poses a severe threat to public safety and national security. Recent incidents indicate coordinated efforts to target India's railway network which is vital lifeline of the nation. These deliberate acts of sabotage, seemingly orchestrated by radical

groups, reveal a coordinated attempt to destabilize the country. Immediate action is critical. I urge that the Government should empower the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to conduct thorough investigations into these incidents and strengthen railway security across the nation. Swift measures are essential to protect lives, restore public confidence, and uphold national integrity.

8. Urgent Need for Revoking Merger of RMS Offices with Speed Post Hubs

SHRI A. A. RAHIM: Recent directive from the Department of Posts to merge Railway Mail Service (RMS) offices with Speed Post hubs and to process Registered Post alongside Speed Post has raised serious concerns. Under the new order, 312 RMS offices will be permanently closed and 93 cities, including 12 in Kerala, will lose their sorting hubs or RMS offices. Processing Speed Post and Registered articles in the same hub is likely to cause delays. Additionally, the absence of standardized postage rates means customers are being charged differently for similar services, which will undermine trust. I urge the Union Government to revoke this order and safeguard RMS offices. New posts should be created in RMS with regular recruitment to strengthen the system and ensure its sustainability.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

9. Demand for Restoring Education to State List for a More Effective System

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: This is to urge the Government to restore education in India to the State List to empower States to address local needs and uphold federalism. India's vast diversity and the vast gap in the literacy rate of Bihar compared with Kerala and Tamil Nadu demonstrates the need for localized policymaking. States are better equipped to design policies tailored to their specific socio-cultural landscapes. Decentralization allows States to innovate, ensuring systems are responsive to local needs. Returning 'Education' to the State List would restore States' autonomy, enhance accountability, and enable localized strategies crucial for improving educational outcomes in a diverse country like India.

(Dr. John Brittas, Shri A.A. Rahim, Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu and Shri N.R. Elango also associated.)

10. Demand for Viability Gap Funding (VGF) by Way of Non-Repayable Grant for Vizhinjam International Seaport, Thiruvananthapuram

DR. JOHN BRITTAS: Vizhinjam Seaport exemplifies Kerala's success in infrastructure development. As India's deepest port capable of accommodating mother ships, its strategic location along major international shipping routes positions it to compete with global maritime hubs like Colombo, Singapore and Dubai. While approving VGF grant in 2015, Centre made a stipulation requiring Kerala to repay the VGF grant later in NPV terms through revenue sharing. I urge Government to release Vizhinjam's full VGF amount without repayment conditions and ensure parity in infrastructure project treatment across States for equitable development.

(Shri A.A. Rahim, Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla and Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu also associated.)

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