

A statement issued by Shri Ram Naik, BJP leader & former Minister of State for Railways (Independent Charge) in a press conference held in Mumbai on 23rd December, 2009.

Railway White Paper-Prime Minister should apologize : Ram Naik

Mumbai, Wednesday: "The so-called 'Management Guru', former Railway Minister Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav stands fully exposed in view of the White Paper presented by Smt. Mamata Banerjee, Railway Minister to the Lok Sabha on the last day of the winter session. The budgets presented by him have misled the Parliament. However, every budget is approved as joint responsibility by the Cabinet which is presided over by the Prime Minister. Hence Dr Manmohan Singh owes an explanation to the Parliament and the people. He must also apologize for misleading the nation", stated Shri Ram Naik, BJP leader & former Minister of State for Railways (Independent Charge). He was addressing the media persons today in Mumbai.

Stating that when he had earlier contested the profit figures quoted by Shri Laloo Prasad, few persons had commented that it was opposition for the sake of opposition. Shri Ram Naik added, "the White Paper on Railways presented to the Lok Sabha by Smt. Mamata Banerjee on the last day of the winter session categorically states that the amount of Rs. 20,339 crore perceived as profit by Shri Laloo Prasad in the Railway Budget for 2006 - 2007 was 'cash surplus'. It also states that though 189 trains were reclassified as 'super-fast trains' during the last five years, for many of them there was no reduction in the running time; yet the super - fast surcharge was levied. In 2008-2009, the 'Tatkal Scheme' earned Rs. 605 crore. Number of seats under the Tatkal Scheme were increased from 5.6 percent of the total reserved seats to 14.2 percent. This had the effect of reducing seat availability through the normal route, inconveniencing the public and also increasing the corruption. The White Paper is full of many such details".

"While presenting the Railway Budget for 2007-2008, Shri Laloo Prasad had boasted of having achieved the 'turn-around' in the Railways. In his Budget speech for 2008-2009, he proclaimed with pride the following stanza :

*'Jadu aur tona, hamane dikhalaya tha pichhale saal
Is baar, pura Indrajal dekh lijiye'*

.2.

This Indrajal (jugglery) earned him the title of 'Management Guru' inside and outside the country. We had witnessed how Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Congress President Smt. Soniya Gandhi were thumping the desks in appreciation of his speech. However the White Paper presented by Smt. Mamata Banerjee has exposed the hollowness of his claims. Keeping in mind the sanctity of the Budget in the parliamentary system, Dr. Manmohan Singh owes not only an explanation but also an apology to the country," demanded Shri Ram Naik.

The White Paper dwells on challenges before the Railways, how to meet them, system of accounting, etc. It concludes," However, if the Railways are to break from its past and move forward rapidly to meet the challenges of a growing India, these issues would need to be addressed boldly." Shri Naik has therefore appealed to have comprehensive discussion and debate on it by trade, industry, passengers, parliament and other stake-holders.

"The White Paper has not touched the issue of suburban railway services. As an M.P., I had earlier demanded a white paper on Mumbai Suburban Railway System. In response, Shri George Fernandes, the then Railway Minister had published it on 10th September, 1990. Nearly 20 years have passed. The number of commuters has increased beyond imagination. They are facing manifold problems. There are frequent disruptions in the train services. It is therefore necessary to issue a fresh White Paper on Mumbai Suburban Railway System and also to have deliberations amongst all the stake - holders", stated Shri Ram Naik at the end.

(Office Secretary)