

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No overaged coaches are used in trains running in Eastern, North East Frontier and South Eastern Railways and it is Railways' constant endeavour to provide all amenity fittings in good working condition on coaches before commencement of the journey. In fact, as a result of various measures taken by Railways, passenger complaints relating to upkeep of coaches have reduced significantly over the last two years.

(b) Question does not arise. However, replacement of overaged coaches which are used in other application than passenger trains is a continuous process and new coaches are being added to the fleet every year.

(c) Average age of passenger coaches zonewise is as under:—

(Data as on 31.3.1997)

| Railway | Average age |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Central | 11 yrs. |
| Eastern | 9 yrs. |
| Northern | 9 yrs. |
| North Eastern | 9 yrs. |
| Northeast Frontier | 10 yrs. |
| Southern | 10 yrs. |
| South Central | 11 yrs. |
| South Eastern | 9 yrs. |
| Western | 11 yrs. |

Construction of Sambalpur-Talcher Railway line

1182. SHRI NARENDRA PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated cost and the time limit for the construction of the Sambalpur-Talcher Railway Line;

(b) whether there has been delay in completing the project; and

(c) if so, the revised estimate of the project and by when it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) The estimated cost of Talchar-Sambalpur line is Rs. 336.68 crores. The line was targetted to be completed in Dec. 95 but was delayed due to constraint of resources. The present anticipated cost is Rs. 360 crores and the expected date of completion is 30-6-98.

Sale of Railway Tickets at a Premium During the Holiday Season

1183. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during holiday season, railway tickets are sold at a premium by some agents in collaboration with railway employees;

(b) what action Railways have taken against such agents and railway employees;

(c) whether it is a fact that vigilance branch of the Railways is inactive in detecting such incidents; and

(d) whether any action has been taken in this regard; if so, the details of the total financial recovery and confiscation of tickets, zone-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Some cases of unscrupulous elements indulging in malpractices in reservation have come to notice.

(b) to (d) To curb such activities, regular preventive/decoy checks are conducted by the Vigilance and Commercial Organisation of the railways in coordination with RPF/GRP. In 1997-98, 4808 persons were apprehended and were dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Railway Act, 1989. Action was also taken against 646 defaulting staff. The number of transferred ticket cases detected and amount realised