

ject to clearance by the Planning Commission.

(d) Yes, Sir. The National Transport Policy Committee have recommended electrification of main trunk routes covering the four metropolitan cities and high mineral carrying routes in the first priority and they have recommended the minimum rate of about 350 Kms. per annum on a 10 years programme basis]

Parallel Railway Bookings

*274 SHRI V. GOPALSAMY:
SHRI L. GANESHAN:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in the 'Statesman' dated the 18th November, 1980 regarding parallel railway bookings by touts and blackmarketeers near a number of city booking offices of both Eastern and South Eastern Railways in Calcutta; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken to stop this practice?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) Yes, Sir,

(b) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

No parallel booking counter run by touts and blackmarketeers as alleged has been found operating in Calcutta during checks. Past checks have revealed that certain touts either in an organised or isolated manner do exploit the public to travel by a particular train only.

2. Intensive checks are being conducted by the Vigilance and Commercial Organisations of the Railways on the reservation offices to discourage

the activities of touts and anti-social elements dealing in reserved accommodation. If any specific information is furnished about the functioning of these touts with or without the collusion of railway staff, raids are conducted and follow up action is appropriately taken in conjunction with CBI. To counteract this evil to some more extent, a Special Squad has been set up in the Ministry to deal with particularly the malpractices in reservation. As the activities of touts and anti-social elements are predominant during summer and holiday rush, special care has been taken to organise more checks during these seasons.

3. Analysis made of the availability of accommodation at important reservation points has revealed that barring rush periods, accommodation is available in almost all the trains 4-5 days in advance. Since the question is basically one of demand and supply, endeavours have been made to reduce the gap between demand and supply by introducing new trains, augmenting the loads of existing trains, extending their runs, increasing the frequency of weekly/biweekly trains and running holiday specials on important routes to clear the rush of traffic.

4. The various measures taken by the Railways to contain the activities of unauthorised travel agents and other anti-social elements indulging in the corrupt practices include the following:—

(i) Whenever a person, not being a railway servant or an agent authorised by the Railway Administration in this behalf, is found selling railway tickets, he/she is handed over to the Police for further action in accordance with Section 114 of the Indian Railways Act, 1890 which provides for imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 250/- or with both and shall also forfeit the fare which he may have paid and the ticket which he may have sold or attempted to sell. The person purchasing the ticket from the unauthorised persons

is also liable to be prosecuted and punished.

(ii) Announcements are frequently made on the public address system at important stations to educate the passengers that they should purchase tickets only from the Railway reservation counters and should not fall a prey to anti-social elements who indulge in the illegal resale of reserved tickets by charging extra amounts.

(iii) The Railway Time Tables contain the following advice to the passengers:

(a) Refuse to pay any unauthorised charges for reservation and report the demand for such payment to the concerned officials

(b) Refrain from occupying accommodation reserved for other passengers.

(c) Do not buy tickets from unauthorised agents.

(d) Do not travel on transferred or resold reservation tickets as it is a legal offence.

(iv) Vigilance and ticket checking officials of the Railways make intensive and regular checks to detect the cases of persons travelling on transferred tickets and take suitable action in accordance with the extant rules.

(v) During Feb. 1980, a special drive was launched on all Indian Railways. As a result, 2648 persons including touts, towel spreaders and other anti-social elements at reservation offices and on trains were apprehended all over the Railways. Out of these, 702 were sent to jail and 1715 were fined. Rest were let off after being admonished. In Calcutta 74 persons were apprehended.

(vi) During the summer months of 1980, over 600 touts were apprehended during the course of the checks. In Calcutta region alone served by South

Eastern and Eastern Railways, 143 touts were prosecuted.

5. Besides, the following steps have recently been taken to render better and more satisfactory service to the travelling public in the matter of rail reservations.

(i) The time limit for advance reservation has been made six months at all stations and by all trains, to avoid blocking of accommodation by anti-social elements and providing a wider choice to bonafide passengers for planning rail journeys in advance.

(ii) Reservation procedures and arrangements at important stations/ reservation centres have been streamlined by opening additional booking windows, reservation counters and by extending working hours of reservation offices at important and large stations. In the Esplanade Mansion reservation office, Calcutta better arrangements for passengers to stand in queue while procuring tickets in the reservation offices have been envisaged through increase in the number of counters by constructing a mezzanine floor, so that the entire ground space can be utilised for opening more counters. The waiting time for passengers in the queue will be reduced with the increase in the number of counters.

(iii) Firm reservations over and above the normal quota of berths against the vacancies which arise due to normal cancellations are also now being made.

(iv) Extra sitting accommodation is provided in first class and AC 2-tier coaches of Deluxe trains for day time journeys to facilitate more passengers to travel by these trains.

(v) Wait-listed passengers, to certain extent, are now being provided with confirmed reservations during the run of the train against non-turning up of the booked passengers and cancellations.