

were still vacant at Vijayawada in the Madras-Hyderabad line?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR : It may have been so some time back but I can inform him now that there is no spare channel available in the Vijayawada-Madras six channel system.

LOCATION OF DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF KATIHAR AND ALIPURDUAR JUNCTIONS

*218. SHRIMATI MAYA DEVI CHETTRY: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to refer to the reply given to Starred Question No. 433 in the Rnnya Sabha on the 30th May 1956 and state:

(a) whether Government have since finalised the details for setting up divisional headquarters at Katihar and Alipurduar Junctions on the North-Eastern Railway; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons for preferring these two places instead of Siliguri and what is the estimated cost of establishing these two headquarters?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN): (a) and (b). In view of the decision to create a separate zone for the Eastern portion of the N.E. Railway, the divisional scheme which had been previously formulated will have to be reviewed.

SHRIMATI MAYA DEVI CHETTRY: Is it not a fact that Siliguri is the most central place to control both the sides especially during the rainy season? That being so, what is the reason for establishing two Divisional Headquarters in two sides in place of one at the central place?

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: Perhaps the hon. Member did not quite follow my reply, Sir. It has been decided to create a new Zone and the whole scheme of having Divisional Headquarters will have to be reviewed. The details have not yet been

worked out but it is hoped that the Headquarters of that Zone will be located at Pandu.

CONSTRUCTION OF AGARTALA-SHILLONG ROAD

*219. SHRI S. C. DEB: Will the Minister for TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) when the decision to connect Agartala with Shillong by road was taken and what was the programme drawn up to implement the decision;

(b) what progress has so far been made in this connection; and

(c) how long it will take to declare the road open for traffic?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR): (a) and (b). The decision to connect Agartala with Assam border at Churaibari, and not with Shillong, was taken towards the end of 1947. In the first part of the programme, a metalled road with temporary bridges and ferries across major streams had to be constructed. This work was completed in 1954.

In the second part, the road had to be widened, black topped and provided with permanent bridges across the three major streams. This is in progress.

(c) The road is already in use during fair weather.

SHRI H. N. KUNZRU: For how many miles is the road in use?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: For 125 miles.

SHRI H. N. KUNZRU: Is it all *pucca*?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: It is a metalled road but it is being widened now.

SHRI H. N. KUNZRU: For how many years has this arrangement been going on?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: The work was started in 1948 and the metalled road was completed by December 1954.

SHRI S. C. DEB: May I know whether some big bridges are still to be constructed and also whether the approval of the Central Government is required which is causing delay in the construction of these bridges?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: In my reply, I have already said that three major streams have to be bridged. This work is in progress.

SHRI S. C. DEB: May I know whether the approval of the Central Government has been obtained already by the State Government for this purpose?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: The work is being financed by the Central Government and it was given to the Assam Public Works Department for execution, but has since 1955 been transferred to the Tripura Public Works Department for maintenance and further development. It is proposed to complete the project by June 1958. So, the sanctions, I presume, have been issued.

SHRI S. C. DEB: May I know whether the Government have under contemplation the question of declaring this whole road as a National Highway?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: This is really a request for action. I will have it examined.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants to know whether you are contemplating declaring it as a National Highway. For that you have no ready answer available.

SHRI H. N. KUNZRU: Is the hon. Minister aware that this metalled road extends to only about ten or twelve miles beyond Agartala?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, the information that I have is that it is a fair weather road which is in use since 1954.

SHRI H. N. KUNZRU: Fair weather road means that during the rainy season it is only a little better than a *kucha* road. I have seen it during the rainy season.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is no question, Dr. Kunzru.

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR : I accept the information and I shall look into it.

HOLDING UP OF RAJKOT-OKHA MAIL BY A BAND OF ARMED DACOITS

*220. SHRI MAHESWAR NAIK: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to a recent press report to the effect that a band of armed dacoits made an attempt to hold up the Rajkot-Okha Mail by firing at its engine; and

(b) if so, whether there was any casualty as a result of the incident?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN) :

(a) Yes.

(b) No.

SHRI MAHESWAR NAIK: May I know whether these trains have any armed escorts provided?

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: All the trains are not provided with armed escorts.

SHRI MAHESWAR NAIK: What are those particular trains? I want to know whether this particular train had any armed escort.

SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN: No, Sir.

SHRI M. B. JOSHI: May I know the particulars of this incident?