

RAILWAY JOURNEY FROM GAUHATI TO CALCUTTA

*681. DR. S. K. BHUYAN: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that at present a journey by rail from Gauhati to Calcutta takes 36 hours; and

(b) whether Government have considered the possibility of reducing the time of the said railway journey?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS & TRANSPORT (SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN) : (a) The journey from Gauhati to Calcutta takes about 40 hours;

(b) Yes, and certain measures such as ballasting of track, easing of gradients and improving the standards of signalling and interlocking have been programmed and are in hand which are calculated, when completed, to progressively permit of trains running at increased speeds thereby curtailing the overall journey time.

DR. S. K. BHUYAN: May I know if the Government is aware that on account of the length of the Railway journey from Gauhati to Calcutta which involves transshipment at two places passengers are induced to travel by plane which is costly and which is attended by other disadvantages?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: Yes, it is so. But I think the confidence in the air journey is being shaken now.

SHRI B. GUPTA: He seems to be very pleased with it.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: I would like to intervene, Sir, to say that confidence is not shaken.

DR. S. K. BHUYAN: May I know the distance of the entire journey under two heads—the broad gauge section and the meter gauge section?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: The distance *via* the Assam link is 697 miles—290 miles broad gauge and 407 miles by meter gauge. Formerly it was only 452 miles i.e., before Partition *via* Parbatipur—¹233 miles by broad gauge and 219 by meter gauge.

DR. S. K. BHUYAN: Has Government considered that the journey will be shortened if bridges are constructed over the two rivers at the points where transshipments now take place?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: The matter is under the consideration of the Planning Commission.

DR. RADHA KUMUD MOOKERJI: Will the Government be pleased to consider when they will be in a position to restore the Darjeeling Mail along this new route?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: I should like to have notice.

DR. S. K. BHUYAN: Is Government aware that greater speed can be obtained and maintained if the newly constructed portion of the Assam link is strengthened?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: Yes. We are taking steps towards that end.

SHRI KISHEN CHAND: To avoid long journeys, will it not be advisable to subsidise the air journeys?

(No reply.)

DR. S. K. BHUYAN: Is Government aware that Calcutta is the place from where Assam obtains most of its requirements, and that on account of the inconveniences and delay in transit by the Assam Link, the Assam merchants are* compelled to bring their goods by planes by paying enormously high freights?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is not a question. You are giving information.

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: We are trying our best to make this journey short.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

RESERVATION IN THE RAILWAYS FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AND THE SCHEDULED TRIBES.

*655. SHRI S. N. DWIVEDY: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any reservation made for the appointment of members of scheduled castes as employees of the Railways;

(b) if so, what is the percentage fixed for each department of the Railways;

(c) whether this order fixing the percentage has been followed in respect of every department;

(d) whether it is a fact that a representation pointing out irregularities in such appointments, specially in regard to fly-boys, was made before the District Controller of Stores, Kharagpur, Eastern Railways; and

(e) if the answer to part (d) above be in the affirmative, what action has been taken on that representation?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS AND TRANSPORT (SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN): (a) Yes.

(b) For all departments of the Railways:

(i) 124 per cent, of vacancies filled by open competition on an all-India basis, i.e., through the Union Public Service Commission or the Railway Service Commissions or by means of competitive tests held by the recruiting authority; and

(ii) 16.2/3 per cent, of vacancies filled otherwise.

(c) Every effort is made to recruit the requisite number of Scheduled Castes for the vacancies reserved for them. But in certain cases adequate number of suitable Scheduled Castes is not available to fill the posts reserved for them.

id) Yes.

(e) No specific action was taken by the Railway Administration on the representation as the reservation of vacancies in favour of the Scheduled Castes is applied in the case of the Class IV Service on an overall basis and not separately for each category.

ASSISTED SIDINGS FOR COLLIERIES

*657. SHRI B. C. GHOSE: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the terms and conditions on which collieries in Bihar and West Bengal are permitted to construct assisted sidings;

(b) whether the owner of an assisted siding is allowed to allot a portion or the whole of the loading space on an assisted siding to another colliery: if so, on what conditions; if not for what reasons; and

(c) whether the Eastern Railway has recently been refusing permission for the construction of assisted sidings; and if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS AND TRANSPORT (SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN): (a) A copy of the standard form of Assisted Siding agreement giving the terms and conditions relating to the construction of assisted sidings has been laid on the Table of the House.

(b) The owner of an Ass Siding is permitted, with the prior written permission of the Railway administration, to allot a portion' or the whole loading space to another colliery if his raisings drop but this reduces correspondingly the number of wagons he can indent for himself.