

- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether any complaint has been received from contract workers about low wages and inhuman working conditions at railway stations in Kerala; and
- (e) whether Railways would take steps to make regular appointments for cleaning operations in trains, stations and catering units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BHARATSINH SOLANKI): (a) to (c) In terms of extant policy, activities like, mechanised cleaning, garbage disposal, rag picking etc., are contracted out for ensuring cleanliness and proper upkeep of station premises. Outsourcing of these activities has not been prohibited by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Cleaning activities at 23 important stations in Kerala have been outsourced.

(d) Yes, Sir. Two complaints about non-payment of minimum wages by the contractors are being investigated by the Labour Enforcement Officer (Central) and the Railway.

- (e) Wherever vacancies exist, prompt action is taken to fill up the same.

Fire in Howrah-Dehradun Express

2740. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Howrah-Dehradun Express caught fire in Jharkhand's Giridih district;
- (b) if so, the cause of the fire; and
- (c) the steps Railways are taking to avoid recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BHARATSINH SOLANKI): (a) Yes, Sir. An unfortunate incident of fire took place in train no. 13009 Howrah-Dehradun Doon Express between Nimiaghat and Parasnath stations of Dhanbad Division of East Central Railway at about 02.35 hrs. on 22.11.2011. While the train was on run, fire broke out in Three Air Conditioned Coach B1, positioned 8th from train engine. Subsequently, it also spread to adjacent Three Tier AC coach B2. As a result of the fire, the two coaches got completely burnt. In this unfortunate incident, 7 passengers lost their lives and 2 passengers sustained simple injuries.

(b) The cause of the incident of fire is being investigated from all possible angles, including miscreant activity, in cooperation with the State Government authorities of Jharkhand. However, a statutory inquiry into this incident has already been ordered to be conducted by Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), Eastern Circle, under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

(c) Railways have taken various measures to prevent incident of fire in trains, which include the following:—

- (i) Indian Railways have always endeavoured to enhance fire worthiness of coaches by using more fire retardant furnishing materials such as Compreg Board/PVC for coach flooring, laminated sheets for roof, ceiling wall and partition panelling, Rexene and cushioning material for seats and berths, FRP Windows and UIC Vestibule, etc. Specifications for such furnishing materials have been periodically upgraded to incorporate fire retardant parameters in line with UIC and other international norms. All new manufacture of coaches/periodical overhauling of existing coaches is being carried out with fire retardant specifications of the furnishing materials.
- (ii) With a view to improve fire safety in running trains, a pilot project for provision of Comprehensive Fire and Smoke Detection System has been taken up in one rake on Northern Railway. Field trials on this rake are working satisfactorily. It has been decided to provide similar automatic fire alarm system in 20 more rake for extended field trials. The system will provide advance warning in case of any fire hazard in running train and thus enable the passengers to protect them from fire.
- (iii) Guard-cum-Brake Van and AC Coaches in all trains are provided with portable fire extinguishers to cater for emergencies due to fire accidents.
- (iv) Improved materials for electrical fittings and fixtures such as MCB, light fittings, terminal boards, connectors, etc., are being used progressively.
- (v) Detailed instructions have been issued to zonal railways for observance of safe practice in handling of pantry cars and for ensuring periodical inspection of electrical and LPG fittings in the pantry cars.
- (vi) Intensive publicity campaigns to prevent the travelling public from carrying inflammable goods are regularly undertaken.

Accidents in National Capital Region

2741. SHRI AMBETH RAJAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of accidents taken place at railway stations/platforms and number of passengers died during last five years in National Capital Region (NCR);
- (b) the number of passengers died and injured while boarding trains;
- (c) the details of compensation paid to such victims;
- (d) the steps taken to prevent such accidents; and
- (e) the details of medical facilities available at railway stations to help such victims/passengers?