(a) whether it is a fact that the recent Tamil Nadu Express accident was waiting to happen as shortage of staff, scarcity of components and pressure to operate trains on time results in skipping mandatory overhauling to electrical components, especially wiring, inside coaches;

(b) if so, whether Railways have taken a note of these shortcomings and are considering to improve the safety of trains; and

(c) the new steps Railways contemplate to take in the near future in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BHARATSINH SOLANKI): (a) No, Sir. Coaches are having three tier fuse protection against wiring failure and short circuit. All coaches are thoroughly checked for electrical safety during inspection schedule before permitting them on line.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Safety is accorded the highest priority by Indian Railways and all possible steps are undertaken on a continual basis to prevent accidents and to enhance safety. Only halogen free, fire retardant low smoke e-beam irradiated cable are being provided in new coaches. The other steps include timely replacement of over-aged assets, adoption of suitable technologies for upgradation and maintenance of track, rolling stock, signaling and interlocking systems, safety drives, greater emphasis on training of officials and inspections at regular intervals to monitor and educate staff for observance of safe practices. Safety devices/systems to prevent accidents include provision of Block Proving Axle Counters (BPAC), Auxiliary Warning System (AWS), Vigilance Control Device (VCD), Train Protection Warning System (TPWS), Anti Collision Device (ACD)/Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS), etc.

Periodic replacement of electrical items in train coaches

2312. SHRI T.M. SELVAGANAPATHI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that components like switches, alternators and regulators are taken from sick coaches and installed in new ones;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that electrical fixtures are given only a perfunctory check in Railways;

(d) whether as per rules all electrical items should be replaced periodically when midlife overhauling is done every 12 years, but in most of the cases wiring is not changed in coaches; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BHARATSINH SOLANKI): (a) to (c) No, Sir. All electrical items including switches alternator and regulators are maintained in good fettle as per prescribed schedule for reliable and safe operation.

(d) and (e) Replacement of electrical items including rewiring is done during midlife overhauling every 12 years on age cum condition basis.

Railway bridge over Chenab river

†2313. SHRI PARVEZ HASHMI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the railway bridge being constructed over the Chenab river in Kashmir is the highest in the world;

(b) the names of the districts of the Valley which would have a chance to connect with the railway following construction of this bridge;

(c) the details of important information related to this historical railway bridge; and

(d) the details of estimated cost of the bridge and the time-frame within which this project is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BHARATSINH SOLANKI): (a) The railway bridge being constructed over the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir is planned to have a height of 359 meters from river bed level which, as per available information, is the highest railway bridge in the world.

(b) The railway bridge over river Chenab is a part of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla new line project which, on completion, is expected to connect Anantnag, Pulwama, Sopian, Badgam, Srinagar and Baramulla districts of Jammu and Kashmir State to the Railway network.

(c) Special quality structural steel is being used in the construction of the bridge involving very high degree of precision and latest welding technology. Special painting scheme is being used for arch portion which is designed considering a number of additional parameters such as fatigue, seismic effect, blast load, global stability and composite action. Various latest safety measures like measuring wind velocity, ground acceleration in case of earthquake, temperature monitor etc. are also being planned.

(d) The estimated cost of the bridge as per the contract agreement of 2004 is 512.74 crores. The bridge falls in the Katra-Banihal section of the project which is targeted to be completed by December, 2017.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.