

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) to (c) No high speed rail project has been sanctioned in the Eastern States of the country. Ministry of Railways has initiated feasibility study for Delhi-Kolkata high speed rail corridor.

Connecting Himachal Pradesh with Leh

1728. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any request from Government of Himachal Pradesh to connect Himachal Pradesh with Leh through a railway line;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the Government's reaction thereon along with the steps taken/being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) and (b) Requests for providing rail connectivity to Leh have been received from public representatives.

(c) A Reconnaissance Engineering-cum-Traffic (RET) survey for Bilaspur-Kullu-Manali-Leh (498 km.) new line has been completed. The cost of the project was assessed at approx. 32,739 crores (at 2013 price level). The project has been identified as a strategic line by Ministry of Defence. As this strategic line is proposed in Himalayan region, to have a reasonably accurate cost estimate, Final Location Survey has to be carried out along with detailed Geological and Geotechnical studies, etc. Ministry of Railways has requested Ministry of Defence to deposit 157.72 crores for carrying out the survey. The time of completion and cost cannot be ascertained till completion of the Final Local Survey and detailed geo-technical studies. To assess the feasibility and viability of another rail connectivity in Ladakh region, a survey of Srinagar-Kargil-Leh (430 km.) new line has been taken up.

High-speed trains for North-Eastern States

1729. SHRIMATI NAZNIN FARUQUE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state: whether Railways have ignored North-Eastern States by not providing high-speed trains connected with the National Capital and other parts of the country as its priority in the initial phase, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): Rajdhani trains connect Delhi with the North-East, besides other fast trains that connect North-East with other parts of the country. Due to high cost of the high speed rail projects, at this stage, only Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail project has been approved for implementation.

Train to connect Patiala and Chandigarh

1730. SHRI AVINASH RAI KHANNA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has received requests from public for starting a train to connect Patiala and Chandigarh;
- (b) if so, the response of Government thereto; and
- (c) the time-line to connect Patiala and Chandigarh *via* train?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) Requests/representations for introduction of new trains including trains from Patiala to Chandigarh are received at various levels of Railways administration *viz.* Stations, Divisional level, Zonal level and Railway Board's level, a compendium of which is not maintained.

(b) and (c) At present, 14887/14888 Barmer-Kalka Express (daily) is providing a direct connection between Patiala and Chandigarh. Ambala and Patiala are connected by 10 pairs of train services including 9 pairs daily services. Passengers of Patiala desirous of travelling to Chandigarh may avail change over facility at Ambala which is adequately connected by train services to Chandigarh. Introduction of new train from Patiala to Chandigarh is not feasible, at present, due to operational and resource constraints. However, introduction of train is an ongoing process over Indian Railways and is done keeping in view the traffic demand, operational feasibility, availability of resources etc.

Fast track implementation of projects scheme

1731. DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Railways have prioritized certain projects under its Fast track implementation of projects scheme;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, Zone-wise; and