

(d) 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. These include timely replacement of over-aged assets, adoption of suitable technologies for upgradation and maintenance of track, rolling stock, signalling 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 being used to prevent accidents include complete track circuiting, provision of Block Proving Axle Counters (BPAC), Auxiliary Warning System (AWS), Colour Light LED Signals, Vigilance Control Device (VCD), usage of 60 kg. rails and Pre-stressed Concrete Sleepers, Long Rail Panels, Better Welding Technology, Progressive use of Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) Coaches, Centre Buffer Couplers with Integral Coach Factory (ICF) Coaches, etc.

Meeting of Joint Committee on high speed rail project

667. SHRI A. K. SELVARAJ: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a Joint Committee held talks with Japanese authorities very recently regarding country's ambitious high speed rail project, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government has requested for drawing up of a schedule of project implementation and appointment of a General Consultant before finalization of the loan agreement for the said project; and

(c) if so, the response received from the Japanese authorities in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Joint Committee held meeting with Japanese authorities on 16th May, 2016 at Tokyo. It was agreed that the General Consultant for the project shall be appointed by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to fast-track work relating to design, preparation of bid documents and assistance in tender process.

Changes in Tatkal booking system and waitlist system

668. DR. K. V. P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways have made changes in Tatkal booking tickets and waitlist system in railway reservations; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) and (b) Following changes have been made in recent past, in Tatkal Scheme and waiting list system in general reservation:

- (i) With effect from 15.06.2015, timings of booking of Tatkal accommodation in Air-conditioned and non-Air-conditioned classes were staggered to 1000 hours and 1100 hours respectively on the previous day of journey from train originating station.
- (ii) With effect from 25.12.2015, minimum and maximum Tatkal charges were revised.
- (iii) Instructions have been issued to Zonal Railways to fix Tatkal quota upto a maximum of 30% of capacity of coach depending on the utilization of this quota during the last six month period. Instructions have also been issued to review this quota preferably twice a year.
- (iv) With effect from 07.10.2015, the ratio of updation of Tatkal waiting list against cancellation of confirmed general accommodation, which was earlier 1:1, has been revised to 1 (General): 2 (Tatkal).
- (v) For waiting list limit in general reservation, although no change has been made in current waiting list limit, instructions have been issued to zonal Railways to define adequate waiting list limit so that no inconvenience is caused to the passengers in obtaining waiting list tickets against Pooled quota and remote quota.

Bullet trains

†669. SHRI RAM NATH THAKUR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government is committed to strengthen Railways;
- (b) whether it is also a fact that a plan for operating Bullet trains has been formulated in the country;
- (c) the time by when the Bullet train is likely to be operated in the country and the number of trains that have been decided to be operated in the first phase; and
- (d) whether a Bullet train passing through Patna, Bihar has been provisioned, if so, the details thereof and the time-frame for its operation?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.