

Completion of projects depends on a number of factors such as acquisition of land, forestry and wildlife clearances, shifting of utility services etc. apart from availability of adequate funds. Since many of these factors are beyond the control of the Ministry of Railways, therefore, it is not feasible to give time lines for completion of all the projects. As a result, ongoing projects are facing time and cost overrun. It is not possible to measure extent of time and cost over-runs due to several factors as mentioned above.

However, to expedite completion of projects, various steps have been taken, which *inter alia* include generating extra budgetary resources through institutional funding, better project monitoring mechanism and enhancing power of field units for award of contracts and sanction of estimates.

### **Reducing congestion in Bihar-bound trains**

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

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has announced several facilities for train passengers throughout the country, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether Government is aware of the fact that the trains coming from big cities to Bihar remain overcrowded;

(c) whether Government is contemplating to run new trains to Bihar in the next Rail budget in order to reduce congestion in trains; and

(d) the number of new trains provided to Bihar in the last two years and the reasons of trains running late from their scheduled time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN): (a) Some of the policy decisions taken in the recent past with regard to the provision of additional facilities/amenities in train coaches are given below:—

1. Provision of cushioned seats in General Second Class coaches.
2. Provision of magazine bags, bottle holder and snack table in non-air conditioned Sleeper Class coaches.
3. Provision of dust bins in Non-AC coaches.
4. Provision of Braille signages in newly manufactured coaches.
5. Provision of mugs with chain in Non-AC coaches.
6. Provision of toilet facility in the newly manufactured DEMU/MEMU coaches.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

7. Provision of LED lights and adequate charging points in all classes of coaches.

Provision of On Board House Keeping Scheme (OBHS) in all Rajdhani/Shatabdi/Duronto and other important long distance Mail/Express trains for cleaning of coach toilets, doorways, aisle and connected passenger compartments during the run of the trains. This scheme had been implemented in about 780 pairs of trains.

‘Clean My Coach’ service has been introduced in trains provided with OBHS. A passenger can request cleaning of his/her coach/toilets on demand through SMS (Short Messaging Service). OBHS staff contacts the passengers and carries out the cleaning work as per demand. Presently, around 700 pair of trains are covered under this scheme.

Zonal railways have been authorized to introduce Battery Operated Vehicles (BOVs) at major railway stations for disabled, elderly and ailing passengers on ‘first come first served’ basis through sponsorship from individuals, NGOs, Trusts, Charitable Institutions and PSUs/Corporate Houses under their Corporate Social Responsibility, free of charge to passenger or to the Railway. 70 BOVs have already been provided at 48 major railway stations. Further, instructions have also been issued to Zonal Railways to invite Expression of Interest for providing the facility of Battery Operated Car service on payment basis initially at all A1 category stations keeping in view the financial sustainability of the service. This facility can be availed by passengers on ‘first come first served’ basis, however, preference is given to Senior Citizens, physically challenged, pregnant women and medically sick passengers.

In addition, zonal railways have also been instructed to provide one wheelchair per platform and in case of island platforms one wheelchair per two platforms at all A-1 and A category stations.

Further, Yatri Mitra Sewa has also been introduced at major railway stations for enabling passengers to book wheelchair services cum porter services free of cost through NGOs, Charitable Trust, PSUs, etc. under CSR and responsibility of providing this facility has been entrusted with IRCTC. In case of lack of response from NGOs, Charitable Trust, PSUs, etc., this service can also be arranged on payment basis through a service provider, or by IRCTC, on its own.

The following measures related to catering services are announced in the Rail Budget 2016-17:—

- (i) IRCTC would begin to manage catering services in a phased manner. IRCTC would unbundle catering services by creating a distinction primarily between food preparation and food distribution.

- (ii) Extending e-catering services from existing 45 large stations to all 408 'A-1' and 'A' class stations.
- (iii) Explore the possibility of making mandatory catering services optional in trains. Local cuisine of choice will be made available to passengers.
- (iv) Adding 10 more IRCTC operated, mechanized, sophisticated base kitchens to ensure fresh and hygienic supply of food on trains.
- (v) Mandating third party audit in order to ensure desired level of quality in catering services.
- (vi) Introducing a new policy of multi-purpose as against existing single purpose stalls at stations where each stall can provide multiple services required by passengers including milk products and OTC medicines.
- (vii) Enforcing reservation in catering units to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Women, Divyang, etc. We will also introduce a sub-quota of 33% for women in each of the reserved categories. Further, to build local ownership and empowerment, a process of giving weightage to district domicile holders for commercial licenses at stations would be initiated.
- (viii) Exploring the feasibility of providing an option to our customers for drinking tea in kulhad.
- (ix) Janani Sewa: Availability of children's menu items on trains and baby foods, hot milk and hot water would be made available on stations.

(b) State-wise statistics is not maintained on Indian Railways. However, the demand pattern on Indian Railways is not uniform throughout the year and it varies during peak and lean seasons. The demand for travel surges especially during the peak season like during summer holidays, festivals etc. The overall occupancy of all trains on Indian Railways during Financial Year 2015-16 was more than 100%.

(c) and (d) Indian Railways do not run trains on State-wise basis as rail network runs across State boundaries. Further, introduction of train services is an ongoing process on Indian Railways keeping in view traffic demand, operational feasibility, availability of resources, etc. However, the number of Mail/Express trains (originating/terminating basis) introduced during the last two years serving the stations in the State of Bihar is as under:-

Year	No. of trains (in pair)
2014-15	9
2015-16	7

Broadly, trains lose punctuality on Indian Railways due to factors related to its internal working as well as external factors of which the Railways are not in control of. Other than asset failures, various constraints/difficulties which adversely affect punctuality are numerous, such as line capacity constraints on account of increasing passenger and freight traffic, adverse weather conditions (fog, rains, breaches), accidents, intermittent natural calamities such as floods, cyclones, heavy rains, heavy road traffic at level crossing gates, multi faceted law and order problems, including public agitations and bandh calls in left wing extremism affected areas of Bihar and other States, miscreant activities such as theft of Railway assets, mid-section run over cases involving cattle and humans, etc.

**Eliminating railway level crossings on National Highways**

428. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Railways have signed an MoU with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to eliminate railway level crossings on National Highways;
- (b) if so, the number of railway level crossings eliminated by construction of ROB/RUBs during the last two years of signing of the MoU;
- (c) the reasons for very slow pace of implementation of the MoU; and
- (d) the fresh steps taken by Government to expedite the process of eliminating railway level crossings on National Highways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) As per Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Ministry of Railways and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH) on 10.11.2014, MORTH/National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) will replace all level crossings on National Highway (NH) Corridors by Road Over Bridges (ROBs)/Road Under Bridges (RUBs) in next five years at their own cost subject to availability of funds.

In the year 2015-16, 10 number of ROB and in the year 2016-17, 9 number of ROB across level crossings on NH have been constructed by NHAI at its own cost. Out of these 19 locations, 8 number of level crossing have been closed.

As far as progress of construction of ROB under this scheme is concerned, Railways is responsible only for approval of the General Arrangement Drawings (GADs) as far as possible in the 60 days of final submission by MORTH/NHAI officials. The construction of ROB on single entity basis is undertaken by MORTH/NHAI.