

bridges on Indian Railways. All the bridges are inspected twice a year, one before the onset of monsoon and one detailed inspection after the monsoon. In addition, certain bridges are also inspected more frequently depending upon their condition. Repair/strengthening/rehabilitation/rebuilding of railway bridges is a continuous process and is undertaken whenever so warranted by their physical condition as ascertained during these inspections and not on the basis of age. If the corrective/remedial measures are expected to take a long duration due to the complexity of the site situation, etc., suitable safety measures like imposing speed restrictions and keeping such bridge under close watch are taken till the bridge is repaired/strengthened/rehabilitated/rebuilt. During the last five years (2011-12 to 2015-16), 3846 railway bridges have been repaired/strengthened/rehabilitated/rebuilt on Indian Railways which included bridges of varying ages.

#### **Yatri Mitra Sewa**

1258. SHRI SURENDRA SINGH NAGAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state whether Railways are making rail travel comfortable for elderly, differently-abled and ailing passengers by launching Yatri Mitra Sewa at major railway stations across the country, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN): Yes, Sir. The facility of Yatri Mitra Sewa is being provided at major railway stations for enabling passengers *viz.* differently-abled, ailing and old aged persons to book wheel chair services cum porter services. The responsibility of providing Yatri Mitra Sewa has been entrusted to Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC). A Yatri Mitra can either be a Sahayak or any other person provided by IRCTC or the service provider appointed by IRCTC for this purpose. This service can be booked on IRCTC e-ticketing website and 139 Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) and Short Message Service (SMS) or through a mobile. IRCTC may also provide this service free of cost through some non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Charitable Trusts, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) etc. under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). If this service cannot be provided free of cost due to lack of response from NGOs, Charitable Trusts, PSUs etc, IRCTC may arrange this service on payment basis through a service provider or on its own.

#### **Flexi Fare System**

1259. DR. K. V. P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Shatabdi and Rajdhani trains are plying with several vacant seats even after the flexi fare in premium trains was introduced;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Railways would consider withdrawing flexi fare in the premium trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN): (a) and (b) Comparative total vacant berths in Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto trains for the period 09.09.2016 to 31.10.2016 *vis-a-vis* 09.09.2015 to 31.10.2015 are as under:-

Period	09.09.2015 to 31.10.2015	09.09.2016 to 31.10.2016
Total vacant berths in Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto trains	12428	5871*

\* 22413/22414 Nizamuddin-Madgaon Rajdhani Express (which was not running during 09.09.2015 to 31.10.2015) has not been included in the above figure.

(c) At present, there is no proposal to withdraw the flexi fare system in Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto trains.

#### **Shortage of reserved train seats**

1260. SHRI SHAMSHER SINGH DULLO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an acute shortage of reserved seats in various Express and other trains running through various important cities of the country especially Punjab, if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(b) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken by Railways for ensuring availability of berths to passengers by increasing the seats in all Express/other classes of trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN): (a) and (b) On Indian Railways (including Punjab) demand of reserved accommodation is not uniform throughout the year and it varies during peak and lean period and also from class to class and sector to sector. During peak rush period, on popular routes demand generally exceeds availability particularly in upper class. However, during lean periods and on less popular routes and in lower class, confirmed accommodation remains available for comparatively longer period. With a view to providing confirmed accommodation, waiting list position of the trains is monitored and to meet the increased demand various measures are taken which include introduction of new trains, attachment of extra coaches in the existing trains, running of special trains for clearance of extra passengers traffic during peak seasons,