

Direct train from Amritsar to Ahmedabad

2326. SHRI SHWAIT MALIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Ministry is planning to introduce a regular direct train between Amritsar and Ahmedabad to facilitate trade and traders in view of the fact that more than 30,000 metric tonnes of rice are transported to Kandla Port in Gujarat through trucks and that providing direct connectivity would help Railways to earn handsome revenues; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) and (b) Presently Amritsar is not open for goods traffic. However, goods loading can take place from nearby stations like Chheharta, Beas, Tarn Taran and Batala. Goods train can directly reach Ahmedabad from these stations.

Construction of railway line between Thalassery and Mysore

2327. SHRI K.K. RAGESH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the construction of new Broad Gauge line between Thalassery and Mysore is under consideration;
- (b) if so, the status of the project;
- (c) the details of funds proposed for the project, if any; and
- (d) if not, the reason therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) to (d) A project from Thalassery in Kerala to Mysuru in Karnataka has been conceived by Government of Kerala with the purpose of better connectivity between the two States. It is being piloted by a Joint Venture Company of Government of Kerala and Ministry of Railways (Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited). The matter is under investigation and discussion between the two State Governments, especially in view of objections on environmental issues.

A view on funding of project is feasible after finalization of Detailed Project Report.

Revised strategy for station redevelopment programme

2328. DR. R. LAKSHMANAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has issued revised strategy for its 'Station Redevelopment Programme' after interacting with developers, investors and other stakeholders;

- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. During various interactions with developers, investors and other stakeholders, various issues including longer lease period for commercially developed assets, multiple sub leasing, no restrictions on usage, guaranteed time bound approval by Railways' functionaries and simplified bid procedures were repeatedly raised. In response to the suggestions received from the developers, investors and other stakeholders, revised schemes for redevelopment of stations on fast track has been formulated. Ministry of Railways, through various agencies is undertaking techno-economic feasibility studies of railway stations. Based on the outcome of these feasibility studies, stations are planned to be taken up for redevelopment in phases, especially the stations located in major cities, pilgrimage centres and important tourist destinations. The cost of station redevelopment project is to be met by leveraging commercial development of land and air space in and around the stations.

Quality of food served in trains

†2329. SHRI RAKESH SINHA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) how and when the quality of food served in train is checked;
- (b) whether any change is being made in the procedure of giving contracts for catering; and
- (c) whether food menu is approved by the Department or is decided by the contractor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) It is continuous endeavour of Indian Railways (IR) to check the quality of food being served to passengers. Following measures have been put in place to ensure continuous check on quality of food:—

- (i) Food Safety Supervisors have been deployed at Kitchen Units to monitor food safety and hygienic practices.
- (ii) Regular and surprise inspections are conducted by Railways/Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) officials so as to ensure that catering services are provided as per laid down standards.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.