

(b) if so, the names of such trains;

(c) whether Government proposes to take any steps to avoid low passenger occupancy in trains; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and by when, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) and (b) The demand pattern for reserved accommodation over Indian Railways is not uniform. It varies across different sectors and seasons. During financial year 2018-19, the average occupancy of different types of trains including Shatabdi Express trains on an end-to-end basis ranged between 70% and 100%.

(c) and (d) Indian Railways continuously strives to improve passenger traffic over its network. With a view to ensure optimum utilisation of available accommodation, the utilisation of reservation quota is reviewed on periodical basis and necessary adjustments made, wherever required. Further, various initiatives like augmentation of on-board capacity, rationalisation of Flexi-fare scheme, graded discount in classes and sections with low occupancy and offering fare of AC chair Car and Second class unreserved for AC-3 tier coaches and Sleeper class coaches respectively having low occupancy on particular sections, extension of Alternate Train Accommodation Scheme known as VIKALP have been undertaken to enhance passenger traffic.

Improvement of railway infrastructure in the North-Eastern region

2205. SHRI K.G. KENYE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of efforts made by Government to improve railway infrastructure in the North-Eastern region including total expenditure for the same in the last five years, State-wise;

(b) whether Government has fixed any time-frame to bring rail connectivity to all major cities in the North-East including linking all capital cities; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) For development of Assam and North Eastern Region, 20 projects (14 New Lines and 6 Doubling) costing ₹73,214 crore covering a length of 1,786 km, falling fully/partly in the Assam and North

Eastern Region, are under different stages of planning/ approval/ execution. This includes:

14 New Line projects, covering a length of 1,303 km, costing ₹57,826 crore, out of which, commissioning of 333 km length has been achieved and an expenditure of ₹20,062 crore has been incurred upto March, 2019 and an outlay of ₹2828 crore has been provided for 2019-20.

6 Doubling projects, covering a length of 483 km, costing ₹15,388 crore, out of which, commissioning of 20 km length has been achieved and an expenditure of ₹1,298 crore has been incurred upto March, 2019 and an outlay of ₹725 crore has been provided for 2019-20.

Thorough review of throughput enhancement projects has been carried out and with focused approach, the projects have been prioritized into Super Critical, Critical and other throughput enhancement projects. All out sincere and focused efforts are being made by Railway for quick execution of these projects so as to get early returns to Railway.

In the overall interest of the Nation and to ensure that projects are completed in time without cost overrun, lot of monitoring is done in Railways at various levels (field level, Divisional level, Zonal level and Board level) and regular meetings are held with the officials of State Government and concerned authorities to resolve the pending issues that are obstructing the progress of projects.

For important projects, capacity enhancement projects, last mile connectivity etc. institutional financing has been done by arranging loan of ₹1.5 lakh crore, which has increased Railways' capacity for committed fund provision for essential projects.

Average Annual Budget allocation for Infrastructure projects and safety works, falling fully/partly in Assam and North Eastern Region during 2014-19 has been enhanced to ₹5,531 crore per year from ₹2122 crore per year during 2009-14. Thus, the average annual budget allocation during 2014-19 is 261% of average annual budget allocation during 2009-14.

Total allocation of Budget for Infrastructure projects and Safety works, falling fully/ partly in State of Assam and North Eastern States, in 2019-20 is ₹4909 crore which is 231% of the average annual budget allocation of 2009-14 (₹2122 crore/ year).

During 2009-14, 333 km length (66 km New Line, 257 km Gauge Conversion and 10 km Doubling) has been commissioned in Assam and North Eastern Region, at an average annual rate of 67 km per year.

During 2014-19, 1223 km (231 km New Line, 972 km Gauge Conversion and 20 km Doubling) has been commissioned in Assam and North Eastern Region, at an average annual rate of 245 km per year, which is 367% of commissioning during 2009-14.

Projects are not sanctioned State-wise and allotment of budget and expenditure on projects is done project-wise, not State-wise. The expenditure incurred on new lines, gauge conversion and doubling project during last 5 years falling fully/partly in the North Eastern Region is as under:

Year	Expenditure (₹ in crore)
2014-15	5148
2015-16	5398
2016-17	5990
2017-18	4361
2018-19	4965

(b) and (c) The timely completion of any Railway project including projects of capital connectivity of North Eastern States depends on various factors like quick land acquisition by State Government, forest clearance by officials of forest department, shifting of infringing utilities (both underground and over ground), statutory clearances from various authorities, geological and topographical conditions of area, law and order situation in the area of project site, number of working months in a year for particular project site due to climatic conditions, encountering unforeseen conditions like earthquake, flooding, excessive rains, strikes of labour, orders of Hon'ble Courts, situation and conditions of working agencies/contractors etc. All these factors vary project to project and site to site, which affect the completion time and cost of the project, which is finally worked out at the completion stage. As such, confirmed completion time for projects cannot be fixed at this stage.