

The pillars and beams by the side of three windows were slightly damaged.

4. Coach No. 2806A.

There are no apparent signs of damage inside the coach.

Purulia-Kotshila line

445. SHRI BASUDEB ACHARYA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal to convert Purulia-Kotshila narrow gauge line into broad gauge line;

(b) if so, by when; and

(c) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) to (c). The proposal for undertaking a preliminary engineering-cum-traffic survey for conversion of Purulia-Kotshila narrow gauge line into broad gauge in the next financial year is under active consideration.

Economic cooperation with Iran

446. SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI. Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what measures Government have taken in the recent months to improve economic relations with Iran, particularly in the wake of economic steps taken against Iran by some Western countries on the hostages issue; and

(b) what is the likely future of economic cooperation between India and Iran as release of hostages have taken place?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI SHIV SHANKAR): (a) & (b). Efforts to strengthen bilateral economic relations between India and Iran are being made. The growth and develop-

ment of Indo-Iranian economic relations has nothing to do with any economic sanctions against Iran by anyone, or with the question of the now released hostages.

Commerce Minister of Iran visited India in June, 1980, and broad areas for economic cooperation between the two countries were then identified. Further exchange of delegation followed and recently Iran's Deputy Minister of Industry and Mines led a comprehensive and multi-sectoral Iranian economic and industrial delegation to the Engineering Trade Fair in New Delhi. There is better appreciation of the opportunities which exist for Indo-Iranian economic cooperation and the potential for its future development.

Increase in the incidents of Crimes in Trains

447. SHRI SUBHASH YADAV:
SHRI TARIQ ANWAR:
SHRI HIRALAL R. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the incidents of railway accidents, derailments, looting in running trains; thefts in Railways have increased much;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) the total number of passengers killed and injured as a result of the above incidents during 1980-81 upto 31st January, 1981; and

(d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to check these incidents to save life and property of passengers and Government property and ensure safe rail travel?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) There has been some increase in the incidence of robberies and dacoities in trains, but occurrences of thefts of passengers' luggage have shown a decrease.

There has been increase in the number of train accidents also. During April, 1980 to January, 1981, there have been 859 train accidents, including derailments, as against 759 train accidents during the corresponding period of the last year.

(b) Disturbed law and order condition in some of the States has caused increase in the incidence of robbery/dacoity in trains.

The causes of 859 train accidents, which took place during April, 1980 to January, 1981 are as under:

Cause	No of accidents
(i) Failure of railway staff	403
(ii) Failure of persons other than railway staff	91
(iii) Failure of mechanical equipment	147
(iv) Track defects	41
(v) Failure of electrical equipment	2
(vi) Sabotage	3
(vii) Accidental	80
(viii) Cause could not be established	27
(ix) Cause not yet finalised	65
Total	859

(c) 31 passengers were killed and 241 were injured in cases of robbery/dacoity in trains and 192 persons were killed and 747 injured in train accidents during 1980-81 upto 31st January, 1981.

(d) The following steps are taken to prevent robbery/dacoity in trains:

1. Escorting of important trains at night by armed guards of Government railway Police by the concerned State Government.

2. Beat patrolling at stations, platforms, and waiting halls.

3. Surveillance over criminals and known bad characters.

4. Checking of night trains by supervisory officers.

5. Posting of pickets at vulnerable stations by the Police.

6. Special squads of CID of the State Government take up investigation of important cases to apprehend criminals responsible for these crimes..

7. Vestibuled doors of coaches are closed between 2200 hrs. and 0600 hrs.

8. TTEs/Attendants/Conductors have instructions to remain vigilant to prevent entry of unauthorised persons into the coaches particularly reserved compartments.

9. When there is spurt in crime in a particular area, the attention of the State Government concerned is drawn for better protection of railway passengers and necessary assistance is rendered whenever required.

10. As a further measure, over 2,000 armed RPF personnel have been deployed on escorting duty in passenger trains to deter criminals and instill confidence among the travelling public.

11. A DIG/Anti Dacoity has been posted in Railway Board to maintain close liaison with the State Police with a view to ensure better protection to passengers travelling in trains.

Since failure of railway staff is the largest single factor responsible for accidents, safety organisations on the railways have been engaged in relentless campaign to create greater safety consciousness amongst the staff connected with running of trains and to ensure that staff do not violate rules or indulge in short-cut methods that may lead to accidents.

Examination of trains and spot checks in carriage and wagon depots have been intensified and greater care

is being paid to the proper maintenance of track. In order to reduce dependence on the human element, sophisticated aids like ultrasonic flaw detectors for wheels, axles and rails, axle counters, track circuiting etc. are being introduced progressively.

As most of the accidents at level crossings are caused by rash and negligent acts of road users, railways have been conducting educative campaigns amongst the road users by distributing leaflets, pamphlets, exhibiting slides in cinema halls etc. Surprise checks are also conducted in co-ordination with State Police authorities to ensure rigid compliance with Motor Vehicle Rules by road users. In addition, potentially hazardous unmanned level crossings are being manned at the cost of the railways.

Catering Services

448. SHRI RASABEHARI BEHERA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any special drive to improve catering services on the Indian Railways;

(b) if so, the number of surprise checks conducted, zone-wise and the number of cases involving services of substandard food detected in the Railways; and

(c) the proposals for improvement of the standard of food?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): (a) to (c). The Railways make continuous efforts to maintain reasonable standard of catering services. Regular inspections, surprise checks, special drives etc. are being carried out by Officers and inspectors of Commercial and Medical departments to ensure supply of good food.

The number of surprise checks conducted and the number of cases in-

volving service of substandard food detected during 1980 are indicated below:—

Railway	Surprise Checks	Cases detected
Central . . .	227	4
Eastern . . .	112	..
Northern . . .	493	110
North-Eastern . . .	158	25
Northeast-Frontier . . .	365	3
Southern . . .	67	18
South-Central . . .	1144	26
South-Eastern . . .	3	..
Western . . .	3168	21

Besides surprise checks, 821 periodical inspections and special drives were carried out during the year 1980.

A number of steps, such as introduction of pick-up food prepared in modernised base kitchens under close supervision of senior supervisors, adoption of modern culinary techniques, use of modern kitchen gadgets, procurement of good quality food ingredients from standard sources, intensive training to Catering Staff, etc. have been taken to improve the Catering Services on the Railways.

Emergence of New Islands in Pay of Bengal

449. DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT:

SHRI CHIRANJI LAL SHARMA:

Will the minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has established its claim with Bangladesh over the newly emerged islands in the estuary of the border river Hariabangha;

(b) if not, what further steps Government propose to take to negotiate for peaceful possession of the islands in the Bay of Bengal; and