

PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) and (b) A Survey has been included in the Budget, 1998-99. Further consideration of the Project will be possible once the Survey Report becomes available.

Closure of Bauxite and Iron Ore Mines

4316. SHRI BIKRAM KESHARI DEO : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

- (a) whether large number of iron ore and bauxite mines have been closed down in Orissa and Bihar;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken to revive these mines ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) 31 iron ore/iron and manganese mines in Orissa and 3 iron ore mines in Bihar were closed. Of these eleven have subsequently been re-opened in Orissa. No bauxite mine in these two States were closed.

(b) Hon'ble Supreme Court of India vide its order on 12.12.1996 in the Writ Petition (Civil) No. 202 of 1995 directed every State Government to stop mining operations in forest areas where the prior approval of the Central Government, as required under Section 2 of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 has not been sought for any non-forest activity. Subsequently, on the basis of Hon'ble Supreme Court's judgement dated 4.3.1997, eleven iron ore/iron and manganese mines in the State of Orissa, whose leases were granted prior to 25.10.1980 were re-opened.

(c) The Government of Orissa has submitted proposals for diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes in respect of ten mines.

[Translation]

Super Fast Trains

4317. SHRI MOHAN SINGH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

- (a) the number of Superfast trains running all over the country at present;
- (b) whether a separate record of surcharge realised on these superfast trains is maintained;
- (c) if so, the average annual earnings of the Railways therefrom;

(d) the Heads on which the said surcharge realised is spent;

(e) whether the passengers travelling in these superfast trains are provided the pronounced facilities; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) 57 pairs.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The average annual earnings of the Railways is Rs. 26.55 crores.

(d) All the earnings realised are accounted for under Consolidated Fund of India and under the existing system, it is not possible to pin-point the particular heads on which the earnings on surcharge are spent.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. However, the extent of facilities to be provided in various trains also depends upon certain other factors, such as, the nature of the train, number of stoppages, the total running time and the clientele, etc. and not average speed alone.

Transparency in Purchase of Defence Equipments

4318. DR. CHINTA MOHAN :
PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have taken a decision to bring transparency and abolish the system of middlemen in the procurement of arms and other defence material from foreign countries; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) The existing defence procurement procedures debar the involvement of middlemen in the procurement of arms and other defence material from foreign countries. In all contracts a clause containing affirmation by the seller that he is the original manufacturer of the stores in question and he has not engaged any agent/middlemen to intercede with the Government for award of the contract is included. In case of the declaration being incorrect, appropriate penalties ranging from cancellation of the contract to debarment of the supplier from entering into subsequent contracts with the Government are enforced.