

minerals in their respective territorial jurisdictions, for mineral concessions under the Mines & Minerals [Regulation & Development] Act, 1957. Prior approval of the Central Government is required only in respect of Minerals in the First Schedule to this Act and in cases of aerial prospecting. In accordance with section 5(1) (a) of the Act, only an Indian national or a Company as defined in sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Companies Act, 1956, can undertake mining operations in the country.

[English]

Konkan Rail Service

*75 SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA :
SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the highly unsatisfactory nature of the Konkan rail service from Mumbai to Kerala because of considerable delays, outdated and insufficient number of coaches etc.;

(b) if so, the facts and reasons therefor; and

(c) the action taken to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR) : (a) to (c) It is a fact that the punctuality of trains running between Mumbai and Kerala over the Konkan Railway has not been satisfactory. On the Konkan Railway the trains have been consistently losing time in both the directions. The delay in running and consequent loss of punctuality is primarily due to a large number of geo-technical problems being encountered as a result of the just concluded heavy monsoon. Konkan Railway is taking necessary steps to remove the restrictions which had to be put in force to ensure safety, after completing the necessary works. These problems are expected to be resolved shortly and restrictions on this account would be removed and the punctuality of trains on this sector is expected to improve thereafter.

The coaches forming the trains running on Konkan Railway are exactly the same as at present plying on the Indian Railways system and all the coaches are well within their economic life. Trains passing through Konkan Railway also serve other States of the country. On Konkan Railway a maximum number of 18 coaches can be run with a WDM-2 loco. The normal train composition is 16 coaches which is increased to 18 in the peak season.

All the long distance Mail/Express trains on the section serving Kerala except Netravati Express and Kurla-Mangalore Express have pantry cars. On Netravati Express also pantry car will be introduced shortly.

Passengers' Amenities Committee

*76. DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELA :
SHRI SRIRAM CHAUHAN :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has re-constituted the Passengers' Amenities Committee at the national level;

(b) if so, the objectives of the above said Committee;

(c) whether the said Committee has presented any report; and

(d) if so, the main suggestions of the Committee and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The objective of setting up of the Committee is to check the passenger amenities provided at railway stations and on trains with special reference to the following aspects:—

(i) General cleanliness and environmental conditions.

(ii) Drinking water arrangements.

(iii) Facilities provided for dissemination of information to the passengers, like, Enquiry offices, public address system, indicator boards, etc.

(iv) Provision of lights, fans and other electrical amenities.

(v) Provision and maintenance of public conveniences like public lavatories, bathrooms, retiring rooms and waiting halls.

(vi) Provision of such conveniences as benches on platforms, wheel chairs, stretchers, luggage trolleys, etc.

(vii) Reservation and booking for passengers.

(viii) Security of passengers in carriages and at station premises.

- (ix) Losses in railway revenues.
- (x) Ensuring courtesy to passengers.
- (xi) Catering services.

(c) and (d) The Committee, after inspecting some stations, have sent inspection reports indicating the deficiencies noticed in the existing amenities and have made suggestions regarding running of Ladies Specials, improvement in drinking water arrangements, construction of retiring rooms, etc. The observations and suggestions of the Committee have been forwarded to the zonal railways concerned for taking remedial action.

[*Translation*]

**Sale of contaminated mineral water at
Railway Stations**

*77. SHRI PANKAJ CHOUDHRY :
DR. ASHOK PATEL :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the rules under which the contracts for the supply of mineral water to passengers at railway stations and in trains and the period for which these contracts are given;

(b) whether the mineral water being sold at railway stations and in trains is tested regularly;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government have received any complaints in regard to supply of contaminated mineral water during the last two years;

(e) if so, the detail thereof;

(f) whether any inquiry has been conducted in this regard; and

(g) if so, the outcome of the inquiry and the action taken against the guilty persons/firms in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR) : (a) As per the extant guidelines, contracts for supply of mineral water are awarded by each zonal railway following a process of tendering through press notifications. A committee of three senior officers finalise the contract which is normally for a year.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. During the last two years, 28 complaints were received on all Indian Railways viz. 2 complaints each on Central, Eastern and one each on North Eastern and Northeast Frontier and 22 complaints on Northern Railway.

(f) Yes, Sir.

(g) On the basis of inquiry conducted the supply of four brands of mineral water has been discontinued and their contracts terminated. Besides fines were also imposed on the firms on the basis of complaints received.

Breakdown of Computer in 2000

*78. SHRIMATI KRISHNA BOSE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether all the computers will breakdown at the end of the century because of the Millenium bug or Y2 bug and thus the Civil Aviation programme will completely collapse and flying will become extremely dangerous; and

(b) if so, the preventive measures or back-ups the Civil Aviation Ministry has taken or proposes to take?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. Necessary remedial measures are being taken by the concerned civil aviation organizations to make the systems Y2K-compliant and to keep a Contingency Plan in readiness to ensure continuity of Air Transport Operations during the millenium change-over.

Sales Tax on Aviation Turbine Fuel

*79. SHRI PRASAD BABURAO TANPURE :
SHRI S.S. OWAISI :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have sent proposal to the State Governments to abolish or reduce 'Sales Tax' on aviation turbine fuel to reduce the financial burden on domestic airlines;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the States that have accepted this proposal and the reasons for not accepting the proposal by rest of the States?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. On 26th September, 1997, a letter was sent to the Chief Secretaries of all the