

1981. Works amounting to Rs. 193.51 Lakhs were executed before the project was abandoned by the second contractor in June 1994.

(d) Technical committee, which was constituted to go into all the aspects of construction of bridge, has recommended to avoid construction of piers in the running stream. The BRO is working on the revised bridge scheme. The estimated cost and the revised target date of completion will be known after the scheme is finalised and the contract for work is concluded. Reasons for delay have been indicated above, in reply to part (b) of the question.

[Translation]

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Operational Cost of Air India

3607. DR. SUSHIL INDORA :
PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the operational cost of flights of Air India is more than that of other international organisations;

(b) if so, the details of the operational cost of flights of Air India and that of other international organisations, separately; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) :

(a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

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Air Service for Badrinath, Kedarnath and Hemkund

3608. SHRI PANKAJ CHOUDHRY :
SHRI RAMPAL SINGH :
MAJOR GENERAL, BHUVAN CHANDRA
KHANDURI, AVSM :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether any proposal is under consideration of the Government to start an air service for Badrinath, Kedarnath and Hemkund;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) :

(a) to (c) Badrinath, Kedarnath and Hemkund do not have airports and therefore, it is not possible to operate air service with passenger aircraft. However, Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam has plans to start helicopter services on Badrinath-Kedarnath-Rudraprayag sector for which Pawan Hans Helicopters Ltd. will provide one helicopter (5 seater) on wet lease. On receipt of approval from Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam for leasing the helicopter, the services are likely to start from 15th May, 1999 initially for a period of one month.

[English]

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Doubling and Electrification of Railway Lines in Kerala

3609. SHRI K. KARUNAKARAN :
SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the progress made with regards to on-going projects of doubling and electrification and railway lines in Kerala, project-wise;

(b) the expenditure incurred thereon and the total funds required for the completion of these projects; and

(c) the time by which above work is likely to be completed?

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) to (c) The details are as under :

Doubling

(i) *Trivandrum-Quilon* :- 27 kms. has been completed till 31.3.1999 out of 64 km. An Amount of Rs. 106.16 crs. has been spent upto 31.3.1999 and an amount of Rs. 26.98 crs. has been provided in 1999-2000. The work will be completed by March'2000.

(ii) *Mangalore-Shoranpur* :- The work on his doubling is being progressed rapidly and four block sections were completed in 1997-98 (29 kms). In the year 1998-99 another 48 kms has been completed. During 1999-2000 another 68 kms would be completed. An amount of Rs. 184.48

crores has been spent upto 31.3.1999 and an amount of Rs. 125 crores has been provided in 1999-2000.

(iii) *Railway Electrification :-*

Erode-Ernakulam section :- Walayar-Chovvara section (164 km) has been completed. Remaining section from Chovvara to Ernakulam 30 kms is planned for completion by March 2000. An amount of Rs. 161.60 crores has been spent till 31.03.1999. An amount of Rs. 36 crores has been provided in the Budget 1999-2000.

Ernakulam-Trivandrum :- The work has been included in the Budget 1999-2000 at the cost of Rs. 157 crores and will be taken up after obtaining necessary clearances.

Railway Electrification Projects

3610. SHRI ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL :
SHRI VITHAL TUPE :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the railway electrification projects still incomplete which were to be completed during 1997-98;

(b) the reasons for delay in their completion;

(c) the total cost involved in the above projects; project-wise;

(d) the cost likely to be escalated, project-wise; and

(e) the time by which these projects are likely to be completed?

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) No Railway electrification project which was to be completed in 1997-98, is still pending.

(b) to (e) Do not arise.

Allegation made by Ex-Admiral at Press Conference

3611. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL :
Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned, 'Bhagwati' drags

Malik's name' appearing in *Pioneer* dated February 23, 1999;

(b) if so, the fact thereof; and

(c) the follow-up action taken, if any, in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) to (c) Government have seen the news item captioned "Bhagwat drags Malik's name" which appeared in the *Pioneer* dated 23.2.99. The allegations against General V.P. Malik, COAS, were to the effect that (i) General Malik called Shri Bal Thackaray at the Army Day Investiture Ceremony at Mumbai; (ii) General Malik presided over the Award ceremony on 28.5.98 relating to the Veer Sarvakar Award and (iii) General Malik was given extension in service.

2. The Above report had appeared in the press as a sequence to the interaction with the media by ex-Admiral V. Bhagwat at the Press Club of India at Delhi on 22.2.99. General V.P. Malik, the Chief of the Army Staff, has refuted the allegations made by ex-Admiral V. Bhagwat and clarified the position in the statement issued by the COAS, to the press on 9.3.99 to the effect that :

(i) the Army Day Investiture Ceremony which took place at Mumbai on 15.1.96, when General Malik was the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command, was a public function, well attended by military and civil public. The Parade was arranged at Shivaji Park so that the public could witness the parade and investiture ceremony to honour our brave and distinguished soldiers. The Parade was advertised in the media/banners and public was invited. A large number of invitations were also issued to State Government officials, public leaders and dignitaries. Some members from Shri Bal Thackray's family attended the Parade. At the end of the ceremony, Shri Thackray himself came and met the kith and kin of gallantry award winners. General Malik has clarified that he had never met Shri Bal Thackray before or after that function and that ex-Admiral Bhagwat, as an invitee, had himself attended the complete parade and the ceremony as well as other functions. Ex-Admiral Bhagwat had neither on that occasion, or thereafter, raised the issue with General Malik formally or informally.

(ii) Veer Sarvakar Award

This award has been instituted by the Runa Vimochan Trust set up by Shri Madhav