

to exercise the option on financial considerations. There is no proposal to take over this line at present. The justification for conversion to Broad Gauge can be examined only as and when the line is taken over by the Indian Railways.

(vi) Gauge conversion of Nagpur-Nagbhir rail line :

A survey for the above line is presently in progress. Further consideration of the project will be possible once the results of the survey become available.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Amravati - Narkhed rail line is progressing satisfactorily. For other works mentioned above, this aspect will arise only once the projects are sanctioned and taken up.

[Translation]

#### Pension Disbursement Office in Bihar

3041. SHRI H.P. SINGH : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the reasons for which Pension Disbursement Office for defence personnel has not been opened at Aara in Bihar even after the proposal sent by Controller of Defence Accounts, Allahabad;

(b) the norms followed in this regard; and

(c) the time by which the office is likely to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) There are no prescribed norms for opening new Defence Pension Disbursement Offices (DPDOs.). However, a number of factors such as the population of pensioners, basic infrastructure for opening new offices, availability of other paying agencies such as banks/treasuries, requirement of additional manpower etc. have not made it possible to open new Defence Pension Disbursement Offices.

(c) The question does not arise.

[English]

#### Superfast Train between Chennai-Jodhpur

3042. SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received representations for introduction of Superfast train from Chennai to Jodhpur; and

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon?

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) and (b) Some representations have been received in this regard. The same have been examined but not found feasible.

[Translation]

#### Voluntary Retirement by Commissioned Officers

3043. SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Commissioned officers in defence forces who have resigned or opted for voluntary retirement during each of the last three years alongwith the reasons therefor;

(b) whether the Government have studied the reasons behind such huge exodus of officers from Armed forces; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the remedial steps taken to avoid such situation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) The number of Commissioned officers in the Defence Forces, other than the Army Medical Corps, the Army Dental Corps, the Military Nursing Service, the Territorial Army and the Seconded Officers' cadre, who have resigned or have proceeded on voluntary retirement during the last three years is as under :

	Army	Navy	Air Force
1996	288	105	131
1997	435	134	163
1998	488	177	216
(Upto 30th November)			

The existing provisions provide that the Defence Services officers can seek voluntary retirement on the following grounds :

- (i) Supersession
- (ii) Low medical category
- (iii) Absorption in Public Sector Undertakings etc.
- (iv) On compassionate grounds.

(b) and (c) Each and every request for voluntary retirement is examined in accordance with the guidelines issued from time to time and ample precautions are taken to ensure that the interests of the services are not jeopardised or compromised while accepting the requests. Considering the overall strength of the Officers cadres of the Defence Services, the number of officers proceeding on voluntary retirement is not huge or alarming.