

(c) the losses suffered by Indian Railways in each case?

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 strike took place in Indian Railways during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 (till date).

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

[English]

Construction of Bridge over River Chambal

2411. SHRI ASHOK ARGAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the total estimated cost of railway bridge over river Chambal;

(b) the allocation made therefor during 1998-99;

(c) the reasons for slow progress of above bridge;

(d) the steps being taken by the Government for speedy construction; and

(e) the time by which it 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) Rs. 44 crores.

(b) An outlay of Rs. 10 crores has been provided for the work during 1998-99.

(c) to (e) The work is progressing as per schedule and will be completed by 31.3.1999.

[English]

Foreign Tourists Chartered Flights for Port Blair

2412. SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal has been received from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Authority to allow

foreign tourists chartered flights for Port Blair (Andaman Nicobar Islands);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) A proposal has been received from Andaman & Nicobar Administration for operation of tourist charter flights to/from Port Blair. The proposal can be implemented only after completion of necessary infrastructural expansion at Port Blair airport and other procedural requirements.

Garments Units under ESI Scheme

2413. SHRI A. SIDDARAJU: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the garment manufacturing units covered under Employees' State Insurance Scheme in Karnataka;

(b) the number out of them are in Bangalore;

(c) whether some units are running under losses; and

(d) if so, whether the Government are considering to exempt these units from the payment of Employer's contributions?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIYA): (a) 976.

(b) 949.

(c) and (d) There is no provision under the ESI Act, 1948 to exempt the loss making factories/establishments from payment of employer's contributions. As such the information about the establishments running under losses is not maintained by the ESI Corporation.

Quality of Indian Weapons

2414. DR. BIZAY SONKAR SHASTRI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Indian weapons good, except in a war" appearing in 'The Times of India' dated January 20, 1999;

(b) if so, the facts reported therein; and