

tional news and its performance as compared to international standards and other news agencies like BBC;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps contemplated by the Government to bring professionalism in the media and to raise the standard of the news services?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (c) Even though no specific study has been undertaken in the recent past, from time to time steps have been taken to improve the news gathering and editing capability of the news media so that it can come up to international standards. Review of the capability of the Government media in projecting national and international news is a continuous process and suitable steps are taken periodically to bring professionalism in the news media subject to availability of funds, personnel and inter-se priorities within two electronic media. Acquisition of latest hardware, training of news personnel, more visual inputs, improvement in the style of presentation are some of the measures being contemplated.

Central Assistance for Tourism Projects in Mysore

5286. SHRI A. SIDDARAJU: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government had sanctioned Central assistance for tourism projects in Mysore during 1996-97;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the amount released out of the sanctioned amount;

(c) whether the Union Government are aware that Hogenkal falls and Mahadeshwara Hills in Mysore are places of tourist attractions;

(d) if so, whether the Union Government propose to develop the said places during 1997-98; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Department of Tourism, Government of India has sanctioned Rs. 3.90 lakhs and released Rs. 1.80 lakh to construct Sulabh Shouchalaya Complex at the premises of Maharaja's Palace in Mysore during the year 1996-97.

(c) to (e) Central financial assistance for tourism development is provided to State/UT Governments on the basis of specific proposals received from the State Governments and availability of funds. The prioritisation of projects for the central financial assistance during 1997-98 is scheduled in the first quarter.

[Translation]

Completion of Guna-Itawa Railway Line

5287. DR. RAM LAKHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister had announced in Gwalior on December, 1996 to speed-up the work on Guna-Itawa rail line;

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government in this regard;

(c) the length in kilometre of above line completed so far;

(d) the funds sanctioned and expenditure incurred on the above project;

(e) the time by which the entire project is likely to be completed;

(f) the steps taken by the Government to link Bhind district Headquarter with Gwalior; and

(g) the time by which the approval is likely to be given for construction of bridges over the river between Bhind and Itawa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The work is being progressed speedily. The outlay in 1996-97 was increased from Rs. 22 crores to Rs. 37 crores.

(c) 169 kms. of the line has been commissioned so far.

(d) The present sanctioned cost of this project is Rs. 256 crores and the expenditure incurred so far is Rs. 170.29 crores.

(e) By the end of the 9th Five Year Plan.

(f) The gauge conversion of Nonera-Bhind section, a part of this work, is targetted for completion in 1998-99.

(g) The construction of bridges over the rivers between Bhind and Etawah is a part of the sanctioned project and would be taken up and completed within the 9th Five Year Plan.

[English]

Running of Trains between Bangalore-Thiruvananthapuram

5288. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of trains running daily between Bangalore and Thiruvananthapuram;

(b) whether there is a demand for introduction of an additional fast train on the said route; and

(c) if so, the details thereof alongwith the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) At present one