

(a) whether the Government have since manufactured/acquired the sophisticated remote controlled pilotless aircraft;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the name of the supplier country; and

(c) the main features of these aircraft?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) A Pilotless Target Aircraft (PTA), also known as Lakshya, has been designed and developed by Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE). Prototypes for certification have also been produced.

The PTA is fitted with 350 kg. Gas Turbine Engine with a Booster. It is remote controlled from the ground and is fitted with a Tow body.

[Translation]

Irregularity in Konkan Railway Service

1239. SHRI RAMSHETH THAKUR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the irregularity being committed and revenue loss caused in Konkan railway service;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the steps taken by the Government to bring the regularity in Konkan railway service and to increase the revenue;

(d) whether the Konkan Railway Corporation has requested to extend the time limit for payment of fixed bond to be paid in March, 1999; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

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) It is clarified that there is no Konkan Railway service from Mumbai to Kerala. There are, however, two normal Indian Railway services plying between Kurla Terminus and Ernakulam in Kerala and between Kurla Terminus and Mangalore in Karnataka which passes via Konkan Railway. There is no irregularity being committed and

revenue loss caused either on Konkan Railway or in the Indian Railway portion.

The reference regarding irregularity in Konkan Railway service seems to be concerning punctuality in running of trains. It is a fact that during monsoon and the period immediately following it, train services over Konkan Railway had suffered substantially. This was due to the fact that this line had been opened for through traffic with effect from 26-1-1998 and the recently concluded monsoon season was the first monsoon after the section had been opened for through traffic. Since the section is still new, there were a total of 145 incidences of boulder falls and land slides which resulted in temporary dislocation of services as well as imposition of speed restrictions leading to delay in running of trains. After the monsoon period was over, the boulder falls and land slides have removed the constraints and brought down the speed restrictions. With these steps, the train running over Konkan Railway portion during January and February, 1999 has improved considerably and the train are now running well. Steps to increase the revenue include:—

(i) Improving occupancy of trains.

(ii) Introduction of holiday special trains for catering the extra rush.

Regarding freight traffic, whatever traffic was foreseen at the time of drawing up the Project Report of Konkan Railway Corporation has not fully materialised. Even the actual traffic on the Indian Railway system is falling short of the current year's forecast, with the result the prospects of any substantial traffic being available for diversion over the Konkan Railway have become very slim. However, intensive marketing efforts have been consistently made by Konkan Railway Corporation to attract freight traffic. Recently, Roll-on/roll-off service for carrying loaded trucks over the Konkan Railway jurisdiction has been introduced to attract more freight traffic.

(d) The Corporation has not asked for extension in the payment of Bonds to be paid in March, 1999. All those Bond Holders who want to redeem the Bonds in March, will be paid their money. However, as the Corporation proposes to re-issue the Bonds for a further period of 5 years, it has given the option to Bond Holders to continue with the same Bond for another 5 years or to redeem it in case they do not choose to do so.

(e) The total value of the bonds for which this option has been given to Bond Holders is Rs. 140.70 crores.