

it will be processed in the normal course.

SHRI A. NEELALOHITHADASAN: Is the Government aware of the fact that the former Railway Minister just before quitting the Ministry, during his visit to Kerala, has given an assurance to the public of Kerala that the Trichur-Kuttipuram line will be taken up immediately because of the importance of Guruvayoor as a place of pilgrimage? Also I would like to know if it would be included in the next railway budget.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN: Within the budget of 1981-82 this Trichur-Kuttipuram line via Guruvayoor is going to be included and our works programme is very keen to take it up in the next budget at a cost of Rs. 4.23 crores.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTION

Illegal Booking Counters

*465. **SHRI RASHEED MASOOD:**
SHRI CHHANGUR RAM:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of illegal running of the railway booking counters in the metropolitan cities particularly their flourishing business near the city booking offices of Eastern and Southern Railways in Calcutta; and

(b) if so the steps taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI KEDAR PANDAY): (a) The Government are not aware of any illegal running of railway booking counters in metropolitan cities. However some reports of unauthorised persons securing reserved accommodation in the metropolitan cities of Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras and selling the same clandestinely at premium to the intending passengers have come to notice.

3043 LS—2

(b) Intensive checks are being conducted by the Vigilance and Commercial Organisations of the Railways on the reservation offices to discourage the activities of touts and anti-social elements dealing in reserved accommodation. If any specific information is furnished about the functioning of these touts with or without the collusion of railway staff, raids are conducted and follow up action is appropriately taken in conjunction with CBI. To counteract this evil to some more extent, a Special Squad has been set up in the Ministry to deal with particularly the malpractices in reservation. As the activities of touts and anti-social elements are predominant during summer and holiday rush, special care has been taken to organise more checks during these season.

2. Analysis made of the availability of accommodation at important reservation points has revealed that barring rush periods, accommodation is available in almost all the trains 4-5 days in advance. Since the question is basically one of demand and supply, endeavours have been made to reduce the gap between demand and supply by introducing new trains, augmenting the loads of existing trains, extending their runs, increasing the frequency of weekly/biweekly trains and running holiday specials on important routes to clear the rush of traffic.

3. The various measures taken by the Railways to contain the activities of unauthorised travel agents and other anti-social elements indulging in the corrupt practices include the following:—

(i) Whenever a person, not being a railway servant or an agent authorised by the Railway Administration in this behalf, is found selling railway tickets, he/she is handed over to the Police for further action in accordance with Section 114 of the Indian Railways Act, 1890 which provides for imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 250/- or with both and shall also

forfeit the fare which he may have paid and the ticket which he may have sold or attempted to sell. The person purchasing the ticket from the unauthorised person, is also liable to be prosecuted and punished.

(ii) Announcements are frequently made on the public address system at important stations to educate the passengers that they should purchase tickets only from the Railway reservation counters and should not fall a prey to anti-social elements who indulge in the illegal resale of reserved tickets by charging extra amounts.

(iii) The Railway Time Tables contain the following advice to the passengers.

(a) Refuse to pay any unauthorised charges for reservation and report the demand for such payment to the concerned officials.

(b) Refrain from occupying accommodation reserved for other passengers.

(c) Do not buy tickets from unauthorised agents.

(d) Do not travel on transferred or resold reservation tickets as it is a legal offence.

(iv) Vigilance and ticket checking officials of Railways make intensive and regular checks to detect the cases of persons travelling on transferred tickets and take suitable action in accordance with the extant rules.

(v) During Feb., 1980, a special drive was launched on all Indian Railways. As a result, 2648 persons including touts, towel spreaders and other anti-social elements at reservation offices and on trains were apprehended all over the Railways. Out of these, 702 were sent to jail and 1715 were fined.

Rest were let off after being admonished. In Calcutta 74 persons were apprehended.

(vi) During the summer months of 1980, over 800 touts were apprehended during the course of the checks. In Calcutta region alone served by South Eastern and Eastern Railways, 143 touts were prosecuted.

4. Besides, the following steps have recently been taken to render better and more satisfactory service to the travelling public in the matter of rail reservations.

(i) The time limit for advance reservations has been made six months at all stations and by all trains, to avoid blocking of accommodation by anti-social elements and providing a wider choice to bonafide passengers for planning rail journeys in advance.

(ii) Reservation procedures and arrangements at important stations/ reservation centres have been streamlined by opening additional booking windows, reservation counters and by extending working hours of reservation offices at important and large stations. In the Esplanade Mansion reservation office, Calcutta better arrangements for passengers to stand in queue while procuring tickets in the reservation offices have been envisaged through increase in the number of counters by constructing a mezzanine floor, so that the entire ground space can be utilised for opening more counters. The waiting time for passengers in the queue will be reduced with the increase in the number of counters.

(iii) Firm reservations over and above the normal quota of berths against the vacancies which arise due to normal cancellations are also now being made.

(iv) Extra sitting accommodation is provided in first class and AC 2-tier coaches of Deluxe trains for day time journeys to facilitate more passengers to travel by these trains.

(v) Wait-listed passengers, to certain extent, are now being provided with confirmed reservations during the run of the train against non-turning up of the booked passengers and cancellations.

Collection of Tax from Vehicles passing through Baliapattam Bridge

*470. SHRI M. RAMANNA RAI: Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of India are contemplating to collect taxes from the vehicles passing through the newly constructed Baliapattam bridge in Cannanore district on National Highway 17 when it is opened for vehicular traffic;

(b) if so, what are the rates on each variety of vehicles that are proposed to be collected;

(c) whether it is the policy of Government to collect such taxes on the newly constructed bridges on the National Highways; and

(d) if so, the period for which this collection of tax will continue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI BUTA SINGH):

(a) and (c). No taxes as such are to be collected, but in accordance with the National Highways (Fees for use of Permanent Bridges) Rules, 1978, framed in pursuance of the provisions contained in National Highways Act, 1956 (No. 48 of 1956) as amended by

National Highways (Amendment) Act, 1977 (No. 30 of 1977), fees for services or benefits rendered, at the rates indicated in the Schedule attached to these Rules, are leviable only on the mechanically propelled vehicles using permanent bridges on National Highways, the cost of construction of each of which is more than Rs. 25 lakhs and which are opened to traffic on or after the 1st April, 1976. As the cost of the Baliapattam Bridges on National Highway No. 17 in Kerala, is more than Rs. 25 lakhs and as it was opened to traffic on the 7th December, 1980, the fees for services or benefits rendered under the above-mentioned Rules are leviable on the mechanically propelled vehicles using this bridge.

(b) The rates of fees leviable are given in the Schedule attached to the National Highways (Fees for use of Permanent Bridges) Rules, 1978, a copy of which is attached.

(d) The fees are leviable for a limited period only and are to be discontinued as soon as the full capital cost of the bridge (i.e. bridge proper, approach roads, guide bunds and protective works as also structures constructed or improved for collection of fees) including interest thereon as also the maintenance and special repairs expenditure thereon upto the date of discontinuance of the levy of fees, has been recovered.

SCHEDULED ATTACHED TO THE NATIONAL HIGHWAYS (FEES FOR USE OF PERMANENT BRIDGES RULES, 1978

Fees chargeable in respect of mechanical vehicles using permanent bridges, costing more than Rs. 25 lakhs on National Highways completed/to be completed and opened to traffic on or after 1-4-1976 in regard to vehicles other than Defence vehicles, vehicles with VIP symbols, Police vehicles, Fire fighting vehicles, am-