

the end of the visit is laid on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library. See. No. LT-4161/82] It may be noted that India and Bangladesh have decided to set up a Joint Economic Commission to further bilateral economic and technical cooperation between the two countries

Inspection tour of Indian Missions

196. DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a four-member team led by Shri S. K. Bhutani completed the inspection tour of Indian Mission in East Europe; if so, the duration of this inspection Tour and the Indian Missions visited;

(b) whether the Bhutani team has submitted its Report on the work and functioning of Indian Missions, if so, when and the recommendation there-in;

(c) what is the progress of growth rate of bilateral trade of the Missions visited by the team;

(d) whether the team has advised upward revision of the Government thereupon; and

(e) when does the Government plan to inspect the working of other Indian Mission abroad and the time table thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO): (a) Yes, Sir. A four-member team led by Shri S. K. Bhutani has completed the inspection tour of Indian Missions in East Europe. The visit took place from 16th April to 3rd May, 1982, and the Missions visited were our Embassies in Bulgaria, Romania, German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.

(b) All reports have been submitted to the Government for consideration and approval. The recommendations contained therein relate to the functioning of the Mission, budget

and financing procedures, Staff rationalisation, locally recruited personnel and foreign allowance.

(c) Figures relating to growth of bilateral trade during the last decade with each of these countries are as under:

(in Indian rupees—millions)

	1971	1981
Czechoslovakia	400	1611
Hungary	256	710
G.D.R.	415	862
Romania	258	1863
Poland	645	1041
Bulgaria	293	1467

(d) The team has made certain recommendations regarding foreign allowance and these are presently under consideration by the Government.

(e) During the past seven months, 19 Missions have been inspected. Presently this Ministry is working out a plan of inspection in consultation with the Ministry of Finance with a view to institutionalising the process so that our Missions can be inspected periodically after every three to five years.

Acquisition of land for Sakri-Hasanpur line

197. SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 6394 on 1st April, 1982 regarding Tender for construction of staff quarters at Laheria Sarai and state:

(a) whether acquisition of land and earthwork have since been completed for the Sakri-Hasanpur new line;

(b) if so, details thereof and further steps taken; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MAILLIKARJUN): (a) No.

(b) Final Location Survey for the entire line has been completed and the report thereof is under finalisation by the Railway. Land plans for land to be acquired by the Bihar State Government, at its cost are under preparation and finalisation.

(c) In view of the extremely difficult position regarding funds for New Lines, it has not been possible to progress this work.

News item "Take no chance with Railways"

198. DR. A. U. AZMI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to news item "Take no chance with Railways" appearing in the Indian Express of 15 May, 1982 highlighting the taking of more time for making reservations at the booking counters need to open more counters throughout the country where waiting period is more than one hour, declaring of tickets bought from railway booking counters as fake vis-a-vis need to adopt a fool-proof system; indifferent attitude of railway officials towards passengers and need for prompt attention and positioning of TTEs before compartments half an hour before the departure of trains, so also the assistance counter staff, making of wrong entries in registers by the booking clerks; and

(b) if so, reaction of the Government thereto and action taken to streamline the functioning of the booking counters?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MAILLIKARJUN): (a) and (b) A statement is attached.

Statement

Yes. The Government have taken a number of steps to streamline the booking and reservation systems. These include, opening of additional booking and reservation counters during the rush periods, strengthening the reservation organisation consistent with increased workload upgrading the level of supervision, introduction of talex facilities between important stations for speedy transmission of reservation messages, etc. Besides, a system of over-booking certain number of passengers on the counters against anticipated cancellations and providing sitting accommodation to some senior most wait-listed passengers for being provided with sleeper berths against passengers not turning up has been introduced. These measures have ensured accommodation to a large number of wait-listed passengers. A major step has been taken with the enactment of the Indian Railways (Amendment) Act 1982, in May, 1982 prescribing stringent punishment of imprisonment upto three years and fine upto Rs. 1000 for anyone carrying on the business of unauthorisedly securing and supplying rail tickets/reservations and anyone abetting or trying to abet the offence. Regular raids are conducted on the premises of unauthorised travel agents in coordination with law and order authorities; touts and anti-social elements have been rounded up. Door to door checks have been conducted, reply paid letters have been issued to ascertain the genuineness of reservation demands and intensive checks have been organised on trains to cross check the antecedents of the passengers actually travelling with the details given in the requisition slips.

The reservation workload has steadily increased over the years. This is particularly so in metropolitan cities. For example, in Delhi area about 45,000 reservations of berths/seats are arranged every day. The manually operated system is fast proving inadequate for this level of reservations. The possibility of introduction of computerisation in metropolitan cities is being examined.