

- (c) the present status of the proposal; and
 (d) the time by which Kolhapur is likely to be connected with Konkan railway ?

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) Yes, Sir.

(b) A demand has been made for connecting Kolhapur with Ratnagiri.

(c) and (d) A survey for a new BG line from Kolhapur to Ratnagiri on Konkan Railway via Talwade (115 Kms) has been taken up. Further consideration of the project will be possible once the results of the survey become available.

[Translation]

Punctuality of Trains

245. SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the several passenger trains in the country are not running as per their schedule;
 (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
 (c) whether insufficient supply of coal is also responsible for such a situation; and
 (d) the remedial measures taken by the Government in this regard ?

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) and (b) No, Sir. However, the running of trains gets affected at times due to reasons such as accidents, agitations/bandhs, alarm-chain-pulling, equipment failures, miscreant activities, bad weather etc.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Adequate quantity of coal is available on Indian Railways for steam traction

[English]

Cut in Strength of Armed Forces

246. SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA :

SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE :

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to

state:

(a) whether the Government have decided to cut the strength of Army by about 50,000 soldiers by 1999;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken to ensure adequate and effective defence preparedness ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) The Army has formulated a plan for effecting under-posting of 50,000 personnel till 31.3.1999. This will be done in a phased manner covering all types of units and formations. The financial savings generated would help modernise the Army in some measure.

(c) The exercise has been planned in a manner that there will no adverse effect on the defence preparedness of the country.

[Translation]

Production of Steel

247. SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE :

SHRI K.P. NAIDU :

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

- (a) the details of production of steel in the country during the last two years;
 (b) the quantity of steel imported during the last two years and so far in the current financial year indicating names of the countries from which it has been imported;
 (c) the field in which the imported steel is being used; and
 (d) the measures being taken to produce such steel in the country which is being imported at present ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) The details of production of finished steel (carbon) during the last two years is as under :-

	(In lakh tonnes)	
	1996-97	1997-98
Finished Steel	227.20	225.67 (Provisional)

(b) The quantity of finished steel (carbon) imported during the last two years and in the present financial year is as under :

	(In lakh tonnes)		
	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99 April '98
	15.62	17.50 (Prov.)	10.40 (Prov.)