

(c) whether there is any proposal to allot quota of wagons for transporting of handmade matches and fire crackers from Sivakasi - Kovilpatti - Virudhu Nagar to Northern States; and

(d) 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) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir. However, the demands are being met in full.

(d) Does not arise.

Procurement of Wagons

2413. SHRI A. C. JOS: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state the total number of wagons procured under "Own Your Wagon Scheme" by the railways during each of the last three years and the current financial year so far?

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): The information is furnished below:

Year	No. Of wagons procured (in terms of four wheeler units)
1995-96	2625
1996-97	5992.5
1997-98	3015
1998-99 (upto April-98)	135

[Translation]

Gauge Conversion of Ranchi-Lohardaga Rail Line

2414. SHRI INDRA NATH BHAGAT: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was a proposal to convert the Ranchi-Lohardaga metro gauge railway line into broad gauge;

(b) if so, the funds provided therefor during the current financial year; and

(c) the time by which the above work is likely to be commenced?

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) Rs. 10 crores.

(c) The preliminary work has already commenced.

[English]

Defence Laboratories

2415. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's defence laboratories are likely to increase inter-action with the universities soon;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any schemes in this regard are being worked out; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Towards building up technological competence. Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) has partnership with more than 40 Indian academic institutions and universities. This partnership will be further extended to many more institutions with a view to undertake joint advanced research in areas applicable to defence technology.

(c) and (d) DRDO has two approaches for undertaking joint R&D work with academic institutions and universities;

(i) Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)

(ii) Contracts for development projects.

Funding for such R&D projects is done through DRDO's Research & Training (R&T) Scheme and Grants-in-Aid Scheme and also through major R&D programmes. In addition, such projects are also sponsored through four research boards in the areas of Aeronautics, Naval R&D, Armaments and Life Sciences. These boards award focused projects in the frontier areas of technologies in their respective fields.