



**STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS
(2021-22)**

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

**MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)**

EIGHTH REPORT

PASSENGER RESERVATION SYSTEM OF INDIAN RAILWAYS



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

November, 2021/Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

EIGHTH REPORT

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS
(2021-22)**

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

**MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)**

PASSENGER RESERVATION SYSTEM OF INDIAN RAILWAYS

Presented to Lok Sabha on 30.11.2021

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 30.11.2021



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

November, 2021/Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Composition of the Committee (2019-20)	(iii)
Composition of the Committee (2020-21)	(iv)
Composition of the Committee (2021-22)	(v)
Introduction	(vii)
REPORT	
PART-I	
Introductory	1
Classes of Reservation	3
Ticketing in the Indian Railways	4
Budgetary allocation for PRS	4
Mechanism of the PRS	5
Cancellation of Tickets under PRS	6
Tatkal Reservation Scheme	8
Timings of booking	9
Extent of Tatkal Accommodation	9
Refund under the Tatkal Scheme	11
VIKALP	11
Dynamic pricing/Flexi-fare	13
Special Trains on variable fare	14
Quotas in trains	15
Concessions on Indian Railways	16
Senior Citizen Concessions	17
Privilege Pass/Privilege Ticket orders	17
Divyangjans	18
Concessions given to freedom fighters	19
Concessions given to children	20
Proliferation of the PRS	21
Travel Insurance	25

	Grievance redressal	26
PART-II		
Recommendations/ Observations of the Committee		27
ANNEXURES		
	Annexure-I	35
	Annexure-II	39
	Annexure-III	40
	Annexure-IV	41
	Annexure-V	42
APPENDICES		
I	Minutes of the sitting of the Standing Committee on Railways held on 13.03.2020	43
II	Minutes of the sitting of the Standing Committee on Railways held on 26.11.2021	45

COMPOSITION OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS (2019-20)[@]

Shri Radha Mohan Singh - Chairperson

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Dr. Farooq Abdullah
3. Shri T.R. Baalu
4. Smt. Ranjanben Bhatt
5. Shri Pankaj Choudhary
6. Shri Abu Hasem Khan Chowdhury
7. Smt. Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo
8. Shri Arvind Ganpat Sawant[§]
9. Shri Suresh Kodikunnil
10. Shri Kaushalendra Kumar
11. Smt. Diya Kumari
12. Smt. Jaskaur Meena
13. Shri Anubhav Mohanty
14. Shri Sunil Kumar Mondal
15. Smt. Queen Oja
16. Smt. Keshari Devi Patel
17. Shri Mukesh Rajput
18. Shri N. Reddeppa
19. Shri Sumedhanand Saraswati
20. Shri Gopal Jee Thakur
21. Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur

RAJYA SABHA

22. Shri Narhari Amin*
23. Shri Chh. Udayanraje Bhonsle*
24. Shri H.D. Devegowda*
25. Shri N. Gokulakrishnan
26. Prof. Manoj Kumar Jha
27. Shri Joginipally Santosh Kumar
28. Smt. Phulo Devi Netam*
29. Ms. Saroj Pandey
30. Shri Ashok Siddharth
31. Shri Bashistha Narain Singh

[@] Constituted w.e.f. 13.09.2019 vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part II No. 550 dated 13.09.2019.

[§] Shri Arvind Sawant was nominated in place of Shri Hemant Tukaram Godse vide Bulletin-II No. 1170 dt. 25.02.2020

*Members nominated to the Committee w.e.f. 22.07.2020 vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part II No. 1370 dated 24.07.2020.

Note: Shri Mohd. Ali Khan, Shri Garikapati Mohan Rao, Mahant Shambhuprasadji Tundiya and Shri Moti Lal Vora retired w.e.f. 09.04.2020 vide Rajya Sabha Bulletin Part-II No. 59529 dated 02.01.2020.

COMPOSITION OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS (2020-21)[@]

Shri Radha Mohan Singh - Chairperson

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri T.R. Baalu
3. Smt. Ranjanben Bhatt
4. Vacant*
5. Shri Abu Hasem Khan Chowdhury
6. Shri Kaushalendra Kumar
7. Smt. Diya Kumari
8. Smt. Jaskaur Meena
9. Shri Sunil Kumar Mondal
10. Smt. Queen Oja
11. Smt. Keshari Devi Patel
12. Shri Mukesh Rajput
13. Shri N. Reddeppa
14. Shri Achyutananda Samanta
15. Shri Sumedhanand Saraswati
16. Shri Arvind Ganpat Sawant
17. Dr. Amar Singh
18. Smt. Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo
19. Shri Kodikunnil Suresh
20. Shri Gopal Jee Thakur
21. Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur

RAJYA SABHA

22. Shri Narhari Amin
23. Shri Chh. Udayanraje Bhonsle
24. Shri H.D. Devegowda
25. Shri N. Gokulakrishnan
26. Prof. Manoj Kumar Jha
27. Shri Joginipally Santosh Kumar
28. Smt. Phulo Devi Netam
29. Ms. Saroj Pandey
30. Shri Ashok Siddharth
31. Shri Bashistha Narain Singh

[@] Constituted w.e.f. 13.09.2020 vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part II No. 1741 dated 29.09.2020.

* Shri Pankaj Choudhary ceased to be a Member of the Committee consequent upon his appointment as Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance w.e.f. 07.07.2021 vide Cabinet Sectt. Notification No. 1/34/1/2021-Cab.(ii) of date.

COMPOSITION OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS (2021-22)

Shri Radha Mohan Singh - Chairperson

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri T.R. Baalu
3. Smt. Ranjanben Bhatt
4. Shri Abu Hasem Khan Chowdhury
5. Shri Kaushalendra Kumar
6. Smt. Diya Kumari
7. Smt. Jaskaur Meena
8. Shri Sunil Kumar Mondal
9. Ms. Chandrani Murmu
10. Smt. Keshari Devi Patel
11. Shri Mukesh Rajput
12. Shri N. Reddeppa
13. Shri Achyutananda Samanta
14. Shri Sumedhanand Saraswati
15. Shri Arvind Ganpat Sawant
16. Dr. Amar Singh
17. Smt. Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo
18. Shri Kodikunnil Suresh
19. Shri Gopal Jee Thakur
20. Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur
21. Vacant

RAJYA SABHA

22. Shri Narhari Amin
23. Shri Chh. Udayanraje Bhonsle
24. Shri H.D. Devegowda
25. Smt. Phulo Devi Netam
26. Ms. Saroj Pandey
27. Shri Ashok Siddharth
28. Dr. Sumer Singh Solanki
29. Shri Binoy Viswam
30. Prof. Manoj Kumar Jha[#]
31. Vacant

* The Committee constituted w.e.f. 13.09.2021 vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part II No. 3192 dated 09.10.2021.

Prof. Manoj Kumar Jha nominated w.e.f. 14.10.2021 vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part II No. 61163 dated 18.10.2021.

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Prasenjit Singh - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Arun K.Kaushik - Director
3. Shri R.L. Yadav - Additional Director
4. Smt. Banani Sarker Joshi - Committee Officer

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Railways (2021-22), having been authorized by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present this Eighth Report of the Standing Committee on Railways on 'Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways'.

2. The Standing Committee on Railways (17th Lok Sabha) had selected the subject 'Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways' for examination during 2019-20 and 2020-21. The Committee took briefing of the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) along with Chairman & Managing Director - Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Managing Director - Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) on the subject at their sittings held on 13.03.2020.

3. The Committee considered and adopted the Report at their sitting held on 26.11.2021. Minutes of the related sittings are given in the appendix to the Report.

4. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the officers of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), Chairman & Managing Director - Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Managing Director - Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) for appearing before the Committee and furnishing the material and information which the Committee desired in connection with the examination of the subject 'Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways'. They would also like to place on record their deep sense of appreciation for the valuable assistance rendered to them by the officials of the Lok Sabha Secretariat attached to the Committee.

5. For facility of reference and convenience, the observations and recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold letters in Part-II of the Report.

New Delhi;
26 November, 2021
5 Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

RADHA MOHAN SINGH
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Railways

REPORT

INTRODUCTORY

The Indian Railways is the fourth largest railway network in the World after USA, China and Russia spread over 68,442 Route Km with 7,318 Stations. The Indian Railways as a national transporter provide the principal, most economical and environmentally viable mode of transportation for both passenger and freight segments. They act not only as a great integrator connecting people from the most remote corners of our country but also play a crucial role in facilitating a balanced and inclusive socio-economic development of the country as well as serve as an engine of growth which drives the economy by accelerating the development of industry and agriculture.

2. Among two facets of railway operations in the country *i.e.*, passenger segment and freight segment, the passenger segment is considered as the face of Indian Railways, operating 13,500 Passenger trains and moving a stupendous 23 Million passengers daily which is almost equal to moving the entire population of Australia every day.

3. Train travel in India have come a long way since the first passenger train ran on April 16, 1853 between Bombay (Bori Bundar) and Thane with 400 passengers and covered a distance of 34 kms in 55 minutes. Since then, the Indian Railways have gone from strength to strength.

4. To travel on the Indian railways, a passenger need a ticket which he requires to book either through the Passenger Reservation System (PRS) or the Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS). The Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways is the world's largest online railway reservation system and can be described as a nationwide online passenger reservation and ticketing system which allows a passenger, to book train tickets from anywhere to any station on the Indian rail network. PRS also handles changes, cancellations and refunds.

5. Passenger Reservation System is running at about 4043 locations and is handling more than 3000 trains. Computerized reservation terminals have been expanded to remote corners through India Post PRS Centres as well as non-rail head. PRS facilities have been extended through State Government and local bodies. In addition, the facilities of e-ticket has been made available for all mail and express trains through IRCTC website. Apart from it, reserved tickets can also be booked on mobile application. Mobile Apps on Android and Window are available for booking reserved tickets. Besides, Railway facilitates Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) which is functioning at about 6242 locations on Indian Railways. Railways have installed 4000 Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVMs)/Coin-cum-card operated Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (COTVMs) which facilitate purchase of unreserved tickets platform and recharging of season tickets by the passengers by way of touch screen facility. Thus, querying at the counters is significantly reduced during the rush hours. Unreserved ticket booking is also facilitated through Mobile phone via "UTSON MOBILE APP" to promote cashless transaction, contactless ticketing and enhanced customer convenience. To facilitate ticket booking, "Station Ticket Booking Agents" are engaged to issue unreserved tickets at "E" category stations with a view to expanding the facilities for issuing of tickets (both reserved and unreserved), public private partnetship was allowed in establishment and operation of computerized PRS-cum-UTS

Terminals at Centres called “Yatri Ticket Suvidha Kendra (YTSK)”. Also, to provide confirmed reservation to foreign tourists through internet (e-ticketing), they are allowed to book accommodation in Executive Class/1st AC, 2nd AC Class in all trains upto 365 days in advance. The facility is available upto the time of opening of reservation in the train as per Advance Reservation Period. Thereafter, the foreign tourists can book ticket against foreign tourist quota which has been earmarked in certain Mail/Express trains based on demand pattern. Further, for the convenience of users, first reservation charts have been extended both for the tickets booked through internet as well as those booked through Computerized Passenger Reservation System (PRS) counters. This facility is also available through the telephone number 139 and across PRS counters (during working hours of PRS centres).

6. Before the advent of the PRS, Indian Railways was using the system of manual ticketing. The main disadvantages of the manual ticketing system which necessitated its replacement with the PRS were as under: -

- (a) Reservation was possible only at the originating station of the train.
- (b) Since details and tickets were issued manually long queues and longer waiting time ensued for passengers.
- (c) There existed a fair likelihood of errors in the system since details were manually entered in registers which would often lead to passenger inconvenience.
- (d) The ‘availability position’ was not always accurate since details were entered manually. Waitlisted position were also not readily available across the network.
- (e) Possibility of unethical practices arose while allotting reservation, since access to information was restricted.

7. In the light of the above circumstances, the need to modernize the system was acutely felt and hence the PRS, the world’s largest online railway reservation system, was envisaged. The pilot project of PRS was launched on 15 November 1985, over Northern Railway with the installation of the Integrated Multiple Train Passenger Reservation System (IMPRESS), an online transaction processing system developed by the Indian Railways in association with Computer Maintenance Corporation (CMC) Ltd. at New Delhi. The main objectives of the IMPRESS were to (a) provide reserved accommodation on any train from any counter, (b) enquiry regarding any train, (c) preparation of train charts, and (d) accounting of the fare collected. The system also had backup and recovery facilities. This application was subsequently extended and implemented at Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Secunderabad by 1987. Other stations were connected as remote terminals to the existing five computer systems for accessing the entire database of host computer. While the system was a huge improvement over the manual ticketing system, yet it was not without its shortcomings. Moreover, the addition of new locations and growing expectations of the travelling public prompted the need for a more robust ticketing software.

8. Hence a new application software, *i.e.*, Country Wide Network for Computerised Enhanced Reservation and Ticketing (CONCERT) was developed by the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and implemented as a pilot project at the Secunderabad PRS site in September 1994. This was

subsequently extended to the other four PRS sites namely Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. By 18.04.1999, it was successfully implemented all across the country.

9. The modern day PRS has been architected, designed, developed, implemented and is being maintained by Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS), which is responsible for the IT infrastructure of PRS system and also the communication network. Currently, the PRS servers are maintained at the five sites in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Secunderabad and operate in a distributed database process environment.

10. As on 30.06.2020, total active Reservation Centres over Indian Railways are 4043 in number with 10725 terminals across the country including all major stations, and important non-railhead locations such as tourist centers and district headquarters. PRS facility has also been extended up to Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshdweep Islands and some North Eastern States which have limited or no rail connectivity. In addition to railway counters, reservation facility is also available at Post Offices and Defence locations.

CLASSES OF RESERVATION

11. On a query regarding the different classes of tickets that could be booked for travel across the Indian Railways, the Ministry have informed that the Indian Railways have different classes of reservation, which has been made in order to cater to the travel needs of different categories of passengers. Indian Railways currently provide different classes of travel under two broad categories viz. suburban and non-suburban segment. Under the suburban segment, there are two classes i.e. First Class and Second Class (Ordinary). The Committee have been apprised that recently, air conditioned Chair Car had been introduced on the suburban sections of Mumbai area.

12. As per the Ministry, under the non-suburban segment, the various classes under which rail travel is permitted are as under:-

- AC First Class (1A),
- AC Sleeper class (2A),
- AC 3 Tier (3A),
- AC 3 Tier Economy (3E),
- Anubhuti Class (EA),
- Executive Class (EC),
- AC Chair Car (CC),
- First Class (FC),
- Sleeper Class (SL) and
- Second Class (2S).

TICKETING IN THE INDIAN RAILWAYS

13. Travel over the Indian Railways is possible only after purchasing a ticket either through the PRS or the UTS. The Passenger Reservation System handles all reserved accommodation in Indian Railways and is currently processing more than 10 crore transactions involving 4.88 crore passengers per day on an average. It has an uptime of 99.98% (per month) with an average earning of Rs.2873 crores per month, as per the data of the year 2019-20. While the maximum transaction per minute (TPM) capacity of the present day PRS is of 28,915, the average TPM for the year 2019-20 was 8,711. The average number of Ticketing Transactions (reservation & cancellations) in PRS in a day are 14,16,990 (On the basis of January, 2020 data). Out of total transactions, approximately 84 % are on account of booking of tickets whereas 16% are on account of cancellation of tickets. PRS also allows for part cancellation / part modification of tickets online.

14. The options available with the passengers for booking of reserved tickets for travel on Indian Railways are:-

- (a) through computerized PRS counters,
- (b) through IRCTC website/Mobile app
- (c) computerized PRS counters available in Post offices
- (d) Yatri Ticket Suvidha Kendra (YTSK) licensees and
- (e) purchase of a ticket physically at non-rail head locations.

15. To a query on the details of transactions handled by these modes during the last 3 years are as under:

No. of Reserved tickets booked through various methods since 2017 (In lakh).			
Ticket Booking Mode	Tickets Booked in 2017-18	Tickets Booked in 2018-19	Tickets Booked in 2019-20
Non-Railway Head	7.95	7.22	6.90
Post Office	13.19	12.24	13.08
Online Booking-IRCTC	2465.99	2842.68	3017.70
Counter Booking	1216.30	1152.83	1063.11
YTSK Booking	41.93	45.15	47.42

BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR PRS

16. To a query about the funding required for PRS, the Ministry have informed that since the PRS is a key passenger facing application, it requires constant maintenance and also continuous upgradation, for which the fund requirements are met through budgetary allocations for revenue and capital expenditure.

17. The Ministry have furnished the total allocations and utilizations of funds for PRS, during the last 3 years as under -

S. No.	F.Y.	Allocation (Rs Cr)	Utilization (Rs Cr)
1	2017-18	33.99	32.68
2	2018-19	35.16	31.51
3	2019-20	44.97	25.82

18. The Ministry have informed that due to the pandemic scenario towards the end of 2019-20 and lockdown in March end, the bills of some capital funds allocated could not be processed and the funds had to be surrendered, for which the year 2020-21, allocations would be utilized.

19. The total number of passengers carried by the IR during 2016-17 to 2018-19 are as given:

(in millions)	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
(i) Total Passengers carried	8,439	8,286	8,116
(ii) Reserved Passengers	678	653	625

20. Revenue earned from Passenger services during corresponding period is as under:

(Rs. in crores)	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
(i) Revenue from total passengers carried	51,066.65	48,643.14	46,280.46
(ii) Revenue earned from Reserved Passengers in Reserved Coaches.	33,105.24	30,980.42	29,317.34

(Rs. in crore)	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Miscellaneous. Coaching Receipts (including cancellation charges) *	2065.01	1205.96	1160.30

21. The Committee wanted to know the extent of revenue earned from cancellation of tickets. The Ministry in reply have stated that revenue earned from cancellation of tickets is not captured separately. Clerkage charges for tickets made non-issued (cancellation charges) is a part of Miscellaneous Coaching Receipts. This head also includes other revenues like Siding/Wharfage Charges on parcel, Time tables sold, Lost property office receipts, Cloak room charges, Cash office/Accounts Office/Travelling Inspector of Accounts (TIA) debits and other unclassified coaching receipts.

MECHANISM OF THE PRS

22. The Committee wanted to know about the timelines for booking /modification/ cancellation of PRS tickets in various categories of trains. The Ministry of Railways have informed that rail tickets can be booked through the given methods 120 days before the date of journey. This is known as the Advance Reservation Period (ARP) and booking of tickets opens 120 days in advance for almost all long-distance mail/express trains and Shatabdi Express trains. For certain short distance inter-city trains, shorter ARP has been prescribed. The period of advance reservation (ARP) is exclusive of the day of departure of the train. The booking of tickets under ARP begins from 0800 hours onwards.

23. Regarding booking of Tatkal tickets, the Ministry have informed that reservation under Tatkal scheme opens at 1000 hours on the previous day of journey from train originating station for AC classes whereas that for non-AC classes, it starts at 1100 hours on the previous day of journey from train originating station.

24. The Committee also desired to know about the mechanism or working of the PRS. In this regard, the Ministry have explained that in the computerized Passenger Reservation System (PRS), confirmed accommodation is allotted on first come first serve basis and thereafter RAC(reserved against cancellation) wherever applicable or waiting list tickets are issued. The status of these RAC/waiting list tickets gets updated automatically against cancellation of the tickets booked prior to such tickets. At the time of preparation of first reservation chart, the accommodation available in unutilized reservation quota updates status of RAC/waiting list passengers and thereafter accommodation available, if any, can be booked online as well through computerized PRS counters up to preparation of second reservation chart. Second reservation charts are prepared between 30 minutes and 5 minutes before the scheduled/rescheduled time of departure of train.

25. The Ministry have elaborated that waiting list passengers are not allowed to board the reserved coach. Names of all the passengers booked on a full waiting list e-ticket are dropped and refund is credited to the account from which the ticket is booked. Such passengers, if found travelling in train, are considered as travelling without ticket and charged accordingly. The passengers holding waiting list ticket issued from PRS counter can however travel in unreserved coaches of the train.

26. To a specific query on the procedure for allotment of vacant seats to the waitlisted passengers, the Committee were informed that in the event of a vacancy arising on account of non-turning up of passenger, a seat is allotted by onboard ticket checking staff to RAC passengers. Onboard ticket checking staff are authorized to allot vacant accommodation in the train on approach to any passenger holding valid authority to travel. Hand held terminals are being proliferated to ensure automation of the activities being performed by ticket checking staff and to bring more transparency in their functioning.

CANCELLATION OF TICKETS UNDER PRS

27. In addition to booking of reserved tickets, the PRS also handles cancellations and modification of tickets. However, the reserved tickets booked online through Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) website can only be cancelled partially online and at present, the facility of modification of tickets is not available online.

28. Cancellation/Clerkage charges, as applicable as per Railway Passengers (Cancellation of Ticket and Refund of Fare) Rules, 2015, are levied on partial cancellation of tickets online. The details of cancellation charges levied are as under:

S. No.	Heading	Type of Ticket	Time Period	Extent (of charges)
1.	Clerkage Charges (per passenger)	Unreserved, RAC & Waiting	Within prescribed	Unreserved(Second Class)- Rs.30 Second Class (reserved) & other

		List	time limit	classes- Rs. 60/-										
2.	Refund-Cancellation charges (per passenger)	Confirmed	Upto 48 hours before the scheduled Departure of train	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1st AC (1A)/ Executive Class (EC)</td> <td>Rs. 240/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2AC/1st Class (FC)</td> <td>Rs. 200/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3AC/ACC/3A/3E</td> <td>Rs. 180/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sleeper class (SL)</td> <td>Rs. 120/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Second Class(reserved) (2S)</td> <td>Rs. 60/-</td> </tr> </table>	1 st AC (1A)/ Executive Class (EC)	Rs. 240/-	2AC/1 st Class (FC)	Rs. 200/-	3AC/ACC/3A/3E	Rs. 180/-	Sleeper class (SL)	Rs. 120/-	Second Class(reserved) (2S)	Rs. 60/-
1 st AC (1A)/ Executive Class (EC)	Rs. 240/-													
2AC/1 st Class (FC)	Rs. 200/-													
3AC/ACC/3A/3E	Rs. 180/-													
Sleeper class (SL)	Rs. 120/-													
Second Class(reserved) (2S)	Rs. 60/-													
3.	Refund-Cancellation charges (per passenger)	Confirmed	Between 48 hours & 12 hours before the scheduled departure of the train	25% of the fare subject to minimum charges as mentioned in para 2 above										
4.	Refund-Cancellation charges (per passenger)	Confirmed	Between 12 hours and upto 4 hours before the scheduled departure of train	50% of the fare subject to minimum charges as mentioned in para 2 above										
5.	Refund-Cancellation charges (per passenger)	Confirmed	Beyond the above time limit	No refund										
6.	Refund-Cancellation charges (per passenger)	RAC/Waiting List/ Partially confirmed	Upto half an hour before scheduled departure of train	Full Refund minus clerkage charges.										
7.	Railway is unable to provide accommodation for whatever reasons	RAC/Waiting List/ Partially confirmed	within three hours from the actual departure of the train.	Full refund no cancellation/clerkage charge										
8.	Late running of trains by more than 3 hours	RAC/Waiting List/ Partially confirmed	upto actual departure of the train.	Full refund no cancellation/clerkage charge										
9.	Refund- on cancellation of train	Confirmed/RAC/ Waitlisted	Auto refund for e-ticket. Within 3 days excluding day of journey unforeseen circumstanc	Full refund no cancellation/clerkage charge										

			es i.e. accident, breach or flood.	
10.	Preponement/ Postponement of journey	Confirmed/RAC/ Waitlisted: In same class/higher class/same destination/same train/any other train.	Upto 48 hours before the scheduled departure of train	Fresh reservation fee for confirmed tickets and clerkage charge for RAC/WL tickets. If such ticket is cancelled in that case cancellation/clerkage charge shall be levied applicable for the case of both transactions 1 st for preponement/postponement and subsequent for cancellation.

29. The Committee wanted to know about the efforts being made by the Railways for making the system user friendly, transparent and facilitate ease of access. In response, the Ministry have submitted that the following measures have been taken to streamline the process of booking tickets:

- i. A provision has been made for automatic finalization of first reservation chart at least 4 hours before the scheduled departure of train, if the same are not prepared by Railway staff upto that time.
- ii. After preparation of first reservation chart, available accommodation can be booked across all PRS centers as well as through internet till preparation of second reservation charts. The second reservation charts are prepared between 30 minutes and 5 minutes before scheduled/rescheduled time of departure of train. If second charts are not prepared by the Railways upto 5 minutes before schedule/rescheduled time of departure, the system automatically finalizes the second reservation chart. The tickets already booked can also be cancelled during this period as per extant Refund Rules.
- iii. At the time of preparation of second reservation chart, the available vacant accommodation is transferred to next remote location for booking.
- iv. The timings for booking of general and tatkal accommodation have been staggered. On the opening day of reservation, the general accommodation becomes available for booking from 0800 hours onwards, whereas tatkal accommodation becomes available for booking from 1000 hours and 1100 hours onwards for AC and non-AC classes respectively.
- v. Railway Passengers (Cancellation of Ticket and Refund of Fare) Rules were modified to facilitate hassle-free refund to passengers and to keep a check on the misuse of reservation system.

TATKAL RESERVATION SCHEME

30. One of the most popular ticketing/booking option on the Indian Railways is the TATKAL scheme. On being asked about the mechanism of ticketing under TATKAL Scheme, the Ministry have informed that the Tatkal Reservation Scheme was initially formulated and introduced in December, 1997 with a view to provide reservation to those passengers who have to undertake journey at short notice and to reduce the dependence of such passengers on unscrupulous elements/touts.

31. Further, the Ministry have submitted that initially this scheme was available only in around 110 trains and mainly in Sleeper Class. This scheme was thoroughly revised in August, 2004 and some modifications have been made thereafter from time to time. Tatkal scheme is now available in identified passenger trains, almost all types of Mail/Express trains, certain identified special trains, etc. This facility is, however, not available in Suvidha trains. Zonal Railways have been authorised to introduce Tatkal scheme in the passenger trains in that train/class in which average utilisation during the previous financial year has been more than 60%. The minimum Tatkal charges prescribed for different classes are applicable as flat Tatkal charges. All other conditions applicable to normal Tatkal scheme are applicable in case of identified passenger trains.

32. To a specific query on the efficacy of the Tatkal Scheme, the Ministry have informed that the scheme has been received well by the passengers as the occupancy of these trains was more than 100% in 2018-19 as well as in 2019.

33. The salient features of the Tatkal Scheme are given below:-

TIMINGS OF BOOKING

- a. Tatkal booking for AC classes opens at 1000 hours on the previous day of journey excluding date of journey from the train originating station. For non-AC classes, Tatkal booking starts at 1100 hours on the previous day of journey excluding date of journey from the train originating station.
- b. The reservation under this scheme is available only upto the time of preparation of first reservation charts. At the time of preparation of these charts, the vacant Tatkal accommodation is released to the RAC/waitlisted passengers and no Tatkal charges are realised from such passengers.

EXTENT OF TATKAL ACCOMMODATION

34. The Committee have been informed that powers for earmarking of Tatkal accommodation in different classes have been delegated to Zonal Railways who take a decision in this regard keeping in view the utilization pattern in that class during the previous financial year as well as availability of accommodation. The accommodation so earmarked, however, in no case exceed the maximum Tatkal accommodation permissible to be earmarked as per extant instructions, which at present is 30% of the total accommodation available in that class in the train.

35. On being enquired about the charges under Tatkal scheme, it has been informed that Tatkal charges have been fixed as a percentage of fare at the rate of 10% of basic fare for second class and 30% of basic fare for all other classes subject to minimum and maximum as given in the table below:-

Class of Travel	Minimum Tatkal Charges (in Rs.)	Maximum Tatkal Charges (in Rs.)	Minimum Distance charge (in Km) for
Reserved Second Sitting (2S)	10	15	100
Sleeper	100	200	500
AC Chair Car	125	225	250
AC-3 tier	300	400	500

AC-2 tier	400	500	500
Executive	400	500	250

36. The Ministry have further informed that there are two exceptions in terms of the above parameter (a) in case the total run of the train is less than the distance restriction, the end to end fare i.e. from originating to destination station is charged and,(b) there are no such restriction for Tatkal scheme in passenger trains.

37. On being asked about the safeguards being taken by the Ministry to check misuse of the Tatkal quota, the Committee have been informed of the various actions being taken in this regard as under:-

- a. The facility of change of name is not permitted on the bookings made under Tatkal scheme.
- b. No duplicate Tatkal tickets are issued. Duplicate Tatkal tickets are issued only in exceptional cases on payment of full fare including Tatkal charges. No refund will be given for duplicate Tatkal tickets even if original ticket is found.
- c. The reservation under this scheme can be sought by full fare paying passengers only and no passenger holding concessional ticket is allowed to avail reservation under this scheme. Tatkal tickets are issued subject to the applicable distance restrictions.
- d. All authorised ticketing agents of Indian Railways/IRCTC have been restricted from the booking Tatkal tickets at the counters between 1000 hours and 1015 hours for tickets in AC classes and between 1100 hours and 1115 hours for non-AC classes.
- e. It is possible to book a maximum of only four passengers per PNR for Tatkal tickets.
- f. The web services agents of IRCTC have been permitted to book only one Tatkal ticket per train per day on the internet.
- g. Whenever an extra coach is attached in a particular train to clear day to day rush, vacant accommodation available in that extra coach after confirming all waitlist passengers of general class, should be allotted to Tatkal waitlist passengers of that class.
- h. All unutilised reservation quotas released at the time of preparation of first reservation charts would first update general waiting list and thereafter remaining accommodation, if any, should update Tatkal waiting list.
- i. Random security question has been implemented for tatkal ticket booking.
- j. Checks applied on minimum time required to enter the passenger details and displayed CAPTCHA at the time of e-ticket booking by users.
- k. In case of tickets booked under Tatkal scheme, during the journey, one of the passengers booked on that ticket is required to produce any one of the prescribed proofs of identity mentioned below, failing which all the passengers booked on that ticket are considered as travelling without ticket and charged accordingly: -
 - i. Voter Photo Identity Card issued by Election Commission of India.
 - ii. Passport
 - iii. PAN Card issued by Income Tax Department

- iv. Driving Licence issued by RTO
- v. Photo Identity Card having serial number issued by Central /State Government
- vi. Student Identity Card with photograph issued by recognized School/ College for their Students
- vii. Nationalised Bank Passbook with photograph and
- viii. Credit Cards issued by Banks with laminated photograph.
- ix. Unique identification Card "Aadhar" including e-Aadhar & m-Aadhar.
- x. Photo identity cards having serial number issued by Public Sector Undertakings of State/Central Government, District Administrations, Municipal bodies and Panchayat Administrations & Bar Councils of India.

38. It has been clarified by the Ministry that if a passenger shows the Aadhaar/Driving Licence from the 'Issued Documents' section by logging into his/her DigiLocker account, the same is also considered as valid proof of identity.

REFUND UNDER THE TATKAL SCHEME

39. Regarding the refund rules for cancellation of Tatkal quota tickets, the Ministry have stated that refunds are processed as mentioned in Railway Passengers (Cancellation of Ticket and Refund of Fare) Rules, 2015. Keeping in view the short Advance Reservation Period and with a view to make this scheme economically unviable for unscrupulous elements/touts, refund rules of the scheme have been purposefully kept stringent in which no refund is granted on the confirmed Tatkal tickets. Refund of waiting list Tatkal tickets are, however, granted like general waitlisted tickets. It has however been clarified that full refund of fare and Tatkal charges is granted on the tickets booked under Tatkal scheme under certain circumstances like non-attachment of coach, cancellation of train, as given below:-

- i. If the train is delayed by more than 3 hours at the journey originating point of the passenger & not the boarding point if the passenger's journey originating point and boarding point are different.
- ii. If the train is to run on a diverted route and passenger is not willing to travel.
- iii. If the train is to run on diverted route and boarding station or the destination or both the stations are not on the diverted route.
- iv. In case of non-attachment of coach in which Tatkal accommodation has been earmarked and the passenger has not been provided accommodation in the same class.
- v. If the party has been accommodated in lower class and does not want to travel. In case the party travels in lower class, the passenger will be given refund of difference of fare and also the difference of Tatkal charges, if any.

VIKALP

40. Taking cognizance of the long waiting lists on trains particularly on popular routes and the consequent cancellations and shifting to other modes of transport, the Committee wanted to know about the steps being taken by the Railways to ameliorate the situation. In response, the Ministry have

submitted that with a view to provide confirmed accommodation to waitlisted passengers and also to ensure optimal utilization of available accommodation, the Alternate Train Accommodation Scheme known as 'VIKALP' was initially launched on pilot basis only for the tickets booked through internet on two sectors i.e. Delhi–Jammu and Delhi-Lucknow sectors. The scheme has now been implemented only across all categories of trains. The scheme is applicable to all waiting list passengers irrespective of booking quota and concession. During the financial year 2019-20, approximately 52,259 passengers were benefitted with this scheme. This scheme is particularly convenient during the festival season or school holiday season when getting a confirmed seat becomes difficult if not impossible and often passengers are forced to shift to other modes of travel.

41. The details of the scheme are as under:-

- Under this scheme, waiting list passengers can give choice to opt for ATAS scheme. The passengers have the option for getting shifted to a train whose time of departure is upto 72 hours from the date and time for which the original ticket has been booked. The passengers who have not opted for VIKALP at the time of booking can also opt for VIKALP upto 24 hours before scheduled departure of train.
- Neither any extra charges are taken from passenger nor any refund is provided for difference of fare.
- ATAS opted passengers who remain fully Waitlisted at the time of preparation of first reservation chart, are considered for allotment in the alternate train.
- Either all passengers of a PNR or none is transferred to alternate train in same class. The passenger can be considered for shifting to a train leaving from any station amongst the cluster of stations defined by Railways based on the convenience of the passengers to a station serving the destination station on the same analogy.
- Waitlisted passengers of original train are not allowed to board the original train if allotted alternate accommodation.
- Passengers once provided alternate accommodation in alternate train is treated as normal passengers in alternate train and is eligible for upgradation.
- When an ATAS opted passenger opts to cancel, after he/she has been given an alternate accommodation, he/she is treated as a CONFIRMED passenger and the cancellation rules will apply accordingly.
- No refund for difference of fare between the original train and the alternate train, including Tatkal charges, if any, is given to re-allocated passengers.

- Once an ATAS passenger has been allotted alternate accommodation, journey modification is not permitted.
- When a passenger who has been allotted alternate accommodation has not performed his journey in the alternate train, he can claim for refunds by filing a TDR request.

DYNAMIC PRICING / FLEXI-FARE

42. Dynamic pricing had been introduced by the Indian Railways in some of the selected trains which are high in demand with effect from 01.10.2014. Under this scheme, 50% of the existing accommodation under Tatkal Quota has been earmarked as Premium Tatkal Quota and is being booked on dynamic pricing. It is a distance-slab based fare scheme where the fare increases by 20% after each slab of 10% berths subject to maximum three times of Tatkal fare. Other applicable supplementary charges like reservation charge, superfast charge, Goods and Service Tax if applicable etc., are also levied separately. In this regard, the Ministry have clarified that the berths/seats left over from the Premium Tatkal quota are allotted first to the waitlisted passengers under the tatkal quota and thereafter to the passengers waitlisted under general quota.

43. The detailed data of premium tatkal quota since its introduction w.e.f. 01.10.2014 have been furnished by the Ministry as under:-

Financial year	Total number of trains	Average Occupancy	Dynamic earnings (in Rs. Crore)
2014-15 (w.e.f. 01.10.2014)	337	60.84%	123.51
2015-16	383	63.16%	361.52
2016-17	558	60.01%	383.53
2017-18	904	66.57%	500.55
2018-19	1153	67.04%	602.54
2019-20	1212	66.50%	598.00

44. In addition to the dynamic fare scheme, the Railways also have introduced the flexi Fare scheme. It had been introduced in Rajdhani, Shatabdi & Duronto trains w.e.f. 09.09.2016. Under this fare scheme, the fare increases by 10% with every 10% of berths sold subject to maximum limit of 1.4 times in all. The Ministry have, however, clarified that no change has been made in the fare of 1st AC and Executive Class. Other supplementary charges like reservation charges, superfast charge, Catering charges, Goods and service tax etc., as applicable is levied separately.

45. To a query on experience of the Railways in the implementation of the dynamic pricing mechanism, the Committee have been informed that based on the feedback from different quarters, the Ministry have now rationalized the Flexi Fare scheme in Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto trains as under:-

- (i) Discontinuation of Flexi fare scheme from 15 trains till further review and from 32 trains during pre defined lean period of 3 months (February, March & August).

- (ii) Maximum cap of flexi fare scheme has been reduced to 1.4 times in all flexi fare applicable classes. (Before 15.03.2019 maximum limit was 1.5 times in 2nd AC, AC chair car, Second and sleeper classes)
- (iii) Graded discount has been introduced in flexi fare trains, where class-wise occupancy is less than 60%, 4 days prior to scheduled departure of the train as under:-

Occupancy	Discount
Up to 70%	20% on last fare
70 to 80%	10% on last fare
Above 80%	Nil

46. In response to a query on the impact of dynamic pricing on the patronage and earnings of Rajdhani/Duronto/Shatabdi/Suvidha and other trains before and after introduction of flexi-fares /Dynamic pricing/ variable pricing, the Ministry have informed that the number of passengers booked in the trains having flexi fare has registered an increase of 0.95% for the period September 2016 to August 2018 (Two full year Flexi Fare period before rationalization of the scheme) as compared to corresponding period of previous years (Two full year non Flexi Fare period). Further, it has been stated that overall occupancy of Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto trains has registered a continuous increase since the inception of Flexi Fare. The details are as given under:

Financial Year	% Age Occupancy of Flexi Fare Trains
2016-17 (Sept to March)	81.36
2017-18	83.56
2018-19	86.53

The Ministry have also informed that the total additional revenue generated due to implementation of Flexi fare scheme upto March, 2020 is approximately Rs.3000 crore.

SPECIAL TRAINS ON VARIABLE FARE:

47. In addition to Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto trains, certain other trains called Suvidha trains have introduced variable fares. In this regard, the Ministry have apprised the Committee that Suvidha trains with variable fares run over and above the normal time-tabled trains to meet surge in demand during peak seasons, holiday seasons and festivals. The Ministry have elaborated that under this scheme minimum fare of Suvidha trains is equal to Tatkal fare applicable for the class of accommodation for initial 20% of the berths and thereafter the fare increases for subsequent slabs of 20% of seats/berths booked subject to maximum three times of the Tatkal fare. However, unreserved class of Suvidha trains is charged at par with the second class superfast Mail/Express fares.

48. When queried about the impact of dynamic/flexi fares on the finances and occupancy in the Indian Railways given the fact that the passenger segment of the Indian Railways is not yielding adequate revenue and are facing stiff competition from low cost airlines, the Ministry, in a reply, have submitted that there is no fixed maximum limit of fare in Airlines whereas Railways have fixed maximum fare throughout the year. Moreover, Airline fare varied significantly depending on time of operation, stoppages, travel duration, Origin – Destination pair, carrier etc. In contrast, Railways' fare may or may

not be higher than the air fare depending upon the class of travel as well as factors like peak/ lean periods.

49. The Ministry have elaborated that the average occupancy of all reserved accommodation including routes of flexi fare trains during 2015-2016 (Non-flexi period) was 101.15% which has gone up to 108.70% in 2019-20 (Flexi period).

50. The Ministry have also informed that in order to reconcile their social service obligations with their commercial interests and based on the feedback from different quarters, Indian Railways have, with effect from 15.11.2018 for journey commencing from 15.03.2019, rationalized Flexi Fare scheme in Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto trains as under:-

- (i). Discontinuation of Flexi fare scheme from 15 trains till further review and from 32 trains during pre-defined lean period of 3 months (February, March & August).
- (ii). Maximum cap of flexi fare scheme has been reduced to 1.4 times in all flexi fare applicable classes. (Before 15.03.2019 maximum limit was 1.5 times in 2nd AC, AC chair car, Second and sleeper classes)
- (iii). Graded discount has been introduced in flexi fare trains, where class-wise occupancy is less than 60%, 4 days prior to scheduled departure of the train as under:-

Occupancy	Discount
Up to 70%	20% on last fare
70 to 80%	10% on last fare
Above 80%	Nil

51. To a specific query on the pricing of tickets of Humsafar trains, the Committee have been informed that Humsafar trains run on fixed fare, which is 1.15 times of classwise Mail/Express fare.

QUOTAS IN TRAINS

52. The Committee have been informed that ticketing on the Indian Railways involve different types of quotas in trains: The reserved accommodation available in a train is distributed under different reservation quotas as under:-

- i. General
- ii. Tatkal & Premium Tatkal
- iii. Emergency
- iv. Defence
- v. Foreign Tourist
- vi. Ladies
- vii. Senior Citizens
- viii. Quota for persons with disability
- ix. Parliament House
- x. State Government
- xi. RAC
- xii. Pooled Quota
- xiii. CRPF

- xiv. Cancer
- xv. Duty Pass
- xvi. Outstation
- xvii. Railway Employee & duty
- xviii. Yuva
- xix. Value Added Tour Package Quota

CONCESSIONS ON INDIAN RAILWAYS

53. In this regard, the Ministry have submitted that the Indian Railways have a unique position in the country. While it serves as a commercial enterprise it also has a huge social service obligation ranging from running of trains on all routes to granting a wide range of concessions. As a welfare measure, Railway extends concession in passenger fare to more than 50 categories of passengers. There are certain categories of Divyang passengers, 11 types of patients, senior citizens, Press correspondents, war widows, sport persons etc. The element of concession varies from 10% to 100%. They have further stated that no concession is admissible in newly introduced trains like Humsafar, Vande Bharat, Suvidha, Gatimaan etc.

54. When asked to furnish the class -wise figures (in numbers and percentage) of concessions availed by passengers during the last three years, the Ministry, in a written reply have submitted that class-wise details of passengers availing concessions is not maintained separately. They have, however, provided the data of total no. of passengers who availed concessions in passenger fares for the important categories as under:-

Financial Year	Number of Passengers who availed concession (In millions)
2016-17	257.07
2017-18	292.63
2018-19	296.65

55. The Ministry have furnished a detailed list of concessions and their coverage (**ANNEXURE-I**). The Ministry have, however, informed that w.e.f. 20.03.2020 due to Covid-19, Railways have withdrawn concessions in passenger fare to all categories of passengers except 4 categories of Divyangjans, 11 categories of patients and students till further advice.

56. To a query on the quantum of revenue forgone in the passenger earnings segment as a result of concessions during the last 3 years, the Ministry has provided the following information:

Years	Revenue Foregone due to concession in passenger fare (Approx. Rs. in crore)	*Passenger Earnings
2016-17	1670	46280.46
2017-18	1810	48643.14
2018-19	1995	51066.65

SENIOR CITIZEN CONCESSIONS

57. On the Indian Railways, male citizens of minimum 60 years and female citizens of minimum 58 years are granted concessions in the fares of all classes of Mail/Express/Rajdhani/Shatabdi/Jan-Shatabdi/Duronto group of trains. The element of concession is 40% for men and 50% for women. In July 2017, Indian Railways had introduced a 'Give Up scheme' for Senior Citizen passengers under which Senior Citizens could opt to give up 50 per cent or 100 per cent element of concession amount of reserved tickets. The Committee wanted to have the data on the number of senior citizens who have exercised this option of giving up their concession in part or in full since the scheme was launched. In reply, the Ministry have informed that approximately 76.87 lakhs senior citizen passengers had given up their concession during 22.07.2017 to 31.03.2020 and the amount of concession value given up was approximately Rs.126.88 crore. When asked whether the travelling public was aware of such a scheme, Ministry have stated that this information has been printed on the reservation form for easy facilitation. Regarding the issue of giving wider publicity and raise passenger awareness for this scheme, the Committee have been informed that during booking of e-tickets senior citizens are asked to opt one of the three options i.e. Give up 100%, Give up 50%, No Give up. Information on this count is also available in the general information available on the website of IRCTC.

PRIVILEGE PASS/ PRIVILEGE TICKET ORDERS

58. Regarding the details of privilege passes, the Ministry have submitted as under:

"As defined under Rule 2(f) of extant Railway Servants (Pass) Rules-1986 (ie. RSPR-1986), "Pass" means an authority given by the Ministry of Railways or any Railway Administrations to a person authorizing him to travel by rail gratuitously and "Privilege Pass" is accordingly a travel authority. As defined under Rule 2(g) of RSPR-1986, "Privilege Ticket Order" (PTO) is an authority issued in favour of a Railway Servant which may be exchanged for a passenger rail ticket on payment of one third of the normal fare."

59. The Committee wanted to know the circumstances under which these passes/tickets are issued. The Ministry, in a written reply, have stated that,

"In accordance with the provisions of RSPR-1986, only the persons engaged in Railway Service are issued Privilege Passes/PTOs and as long as they continue in such service. The Class of Pass/PTO and its number commensurate with the Status (ie. Gazetted/Non-gazetted) and Pay Level in the Pay Matrix (PLPM) held by the individual Railway Servant. A Privilege Pass or PTO of the Class of entitlement is issued for travel from one Railway Station to another, as requested by the Railway Servant."

60. When asked as to which category of persons can avail this concession, the Committee were informed that Privilege Passes/PTOs are not "Concessions" but are service entitlement of Railway Servants and are granted under the statutory provisions contained in the Railway Servants (Pass) Rules-1986, framed by the President in exercise of powers conferred on him by the proviso to Article 309 of the Constitution of India, as amended from time to time. Whereas "Concessions" are granted by the Ministry of Railways to various categories of travelling public viz., Senior Citizen, Persons with Disability, etc as a social obligation. However, it is stated that all categories of Railway Servants (ie. Gazetted and non-Gazetted), Officers and Staff of Audit Department serving in Railway Audit

Departments and officials of other Departments serving in Indian Railways on deputation are provided Privilege Passes/PTOs, as per entitlement stipulated in RSPR-1986.

61. Regarding the frequency of Privilege Pass/PTO entitlement, the Ministry have informed that as per extant RSPR-1986, the following number of Privilege Passes/PTOs are admissible in a calendar year:-

Privilege Passes:

(a) Gazetted cadre: 6 sets

(b) Non-gazetted cadre: 1 set or 3 sets(i.e. 1 set upto the end of 5thyear of railway service and 3 sets thereafter).

Privileged Ticket Orders:

Gazetted & Non-gazetted cadre: 4 sets (Set means a Pass/PTO for outward and return journey).

62. The Ministry have also clarified that the entitled number of Privilege Passes/PTOs is left to the discretion of the Railway Servants as Privilege Passes/PTOs are issued only on receipt of a request for the same. The Committee also enquired whether Pass/PTO details are entered in the PRS. In this regard, the Ministry have stated that when reservation is made against Privilege Passes/PTOs, details of journeys intended to be performed get entered in the PRS.

63. Regarding the number of passengers who have availed this concession during the last 3 years and in which classes, the Ministry have stated that Privilege Passes/PTOs being not a "Concession" and a statutory service privilege of all the Railway Servants and issued in accordance with RSPR-1986, no separate data regarding the number of Privilege Passes/PTOs issued and the numbers of persons travelled on them are maintained. Regarding the revenue that the Railways have forgone as a result of concession granted under this category during the last three years, the Ministry have stated that travel on Privilege Passes/PTOs also does not necessarily result in any revenue forgone or giving up of revenue. In case of travel by pass holders, when occupancy in the trains is less than 100%, there is "zero revenue foregone" as the vacant berths/seats cannot generate any revenue. Apparently where no revenue can be generated, no revenue can be foregone.

64. Regarding the mechanism in place for prevention of misuse of this concession, the Committee have been informed that the Railway Servants (Pass) Rules, 1986 provide for imposing stringent punishments including dismissal/removal from Railway Service and serves as a deterrent against any kind of misuse of Privilege Passes/PTOs. The Pass/PTO holder is also treated at par with other passengers and subjected to all existing checks by Ticket Checking Staff, Vigilance Squad, etc.

DIVYANGJANS

65. The Committee wanted to know the methodology followed by the Railways to determine the quantum of concessions that can be availed under the Divyangjan category. The Ministry have informed that as a welfare measure and to facilitate Divyang passengers to book concessional tickets

across reservation counters and online through IRCTC as well as to reduce the scope of its misuse, Indian Railways issue Unique numbered photo identity card to eligible Divyangjans. Further, to a specific query on the facilities that are accorded to the Divyangjans in the PRS, the Ministry have informed that they are being provided the following reservation related facilities:-

- i. Concessional online ticket booking facility has been extended to the Divyangjans on the basis of photo identity cards issued by the Zonal Railways.
- ii. A reservation quota of four berths in sleeper class and two berths in 3AC has been earmarked in all trains running on non-suburban sections for Divyangjans performing their journey on handicapped concessional ticket. The person accompanying the Divyangjans as escort is also allotted the berth out of this quota.
- iii. Instructions have also been issued that in the tickets issued through Computerized Passenger Reservation System, to extent feasible, one lower berth should be allotted to the Divyangjans and the person accompanying him/her as escort should be allotted middle/upper berths near the Divyangjans subject to availability of accommodation.
- iv. After departure of the train, if there are vacant lower berths available in the train, and if any Divyangjan booked on the authority of handicapped concessional ticket, who has been allotted upper/middle berth, approaches for allotment of vacant lower berths, the Conductor/Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) has been authorized to allot the vacant lower berth to them making necessary entries in the chart.
- v. Specially designed coaches known as SLRD coaches with wider entrance doors to allow a wheel chair to enter, wider aisles and modified toilet with 4 berths, the lower two for Divyangjans and upper berths for attendants have been attached in almost all Mail/Express trains except Rajdhani, Shatabdi, Jan Shatabdi Express Trains and Duronto Express Trains.
- vi. Instructions have been issued that in all Mail/Express Trains, the SLRD coaches should be treated as unreserved coaches earmarked for exclusive use of Divyangjans. In case of Garib Rath Express Trains which are fully reserved trains, these coaches are treated as reserved for booking by Divyangjans travelling on handicapped concession on payment of full fare of 3 AC class of Garib Rath Express on first come first serve basis.
- vii. Separate counters are earmarked at various Passenger Reservation System (PRS) centers for dealing with the reservation requisitions received from Divyangjans, Senior Citizens, Ex. MPs, MLAs, accredited journalists and freedom fighters, if the average demand per shift not less than 120 tickets. In case, there is no justification for earmarking of an exclusive counter for any of these categories of persons including Divyangjans, one or two counters depending upon the total demand are earmarked for dealing with the reservation requests for all these categories of persons.

CONCESSIONS GIVEN TO FREEDOM FIGHTERS

66. The Ministry have stated that the Indian Railways also provide concessions to freedom fighters and their widows. In this regard, they issue Complimentary Card Passes on lifetime basis free rail

travel in First Class and 2AC along with one companion in the same class by any train all over India except Metro Railway, Kolkata.

67. To a query on the number of passengers and companions that availed the freedom fighter concessions since 2016, the Ministry have stated that a total of 10435 Complimentary Card Passes (CCPs) were issued/renewed in favour of Freedom Fighters/their companions by Indian Railways during 2016, 2017 and 2018.

68. When asked about the number of instances companion concession code was utilized where companions were unaccompanied by the Freedom fighter, the Ministry have stated that under the current procedure it was not feasible to book ticket alone by companion if unaccompanied by Freedom Fighter. In certain cases, the original PNR on which both freedom fighter and companion were booked was released and freedom fighter was booked on a new PNR. The details of concession availed by freedom fighters and their companions and number of passengers less than 72 years using Freedom fighter concession are enclosed as **Annexure-II**. The details of Link-PNR booked against released accommodation is enclosed as **Annexure-III**. The Ministry further informed that debits for the journeys performed by freedom fighters and their companions are raised against Ministry of Home Affairs.

69. On the question of the quantum of revenue foregone as concessions under freedom fighter and companion category during the last 3 years, the Committee were informed that the entire cost of the Complimentary Card Passes (CCPs) given to Freedom Fighters/their companions is reimbursed by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The total amount reimbursed by MHA during 2016 to 2018 for 10,435 CCPs issued/renewed by IR is Rs.33,68,21,743. Therefore, as per the Ministry, no revenue has been foregone by them on this count.

70. When asked about the age profile of passengers availing the freedom fighter concessions keeping in view the fact that it has already been 73 years since India has gained independence including the number of passengers using the freedom fighter concessions who are less than 73 years old, the Ministry have provided the details as appended at **Annexure-IV**. The details of Link-PNR booked for this category of freedom fighters against released accommodation, have also been apprised as **Annexure-V**.

CONCESSIONS GIVEN TO CHILDREN

71. The Committee wanted to know about the guidelines relating to reservation of seats and concessions for children. In reply, the Ministry have informed that Child fare is not the part of concession. They have elaborated that children below 5 years of age travel free without reserved berths/seats. However, the Ministry have clarified that if berths/seats are sought for children, the same are provided on full Adult fare but if berth is not sought for such children, half of the adult fare is charged.

72. When asked whether the Railways have undertaken any review of this category of concessions and the details of last review undertaken, the Ministry have informed that based on the feedback from different quarters, review of concession policy is a continuous and ongoing process. They have also outlined the following actions taken to rationalize concession policy during the last six years:-

- i. Changes have been made during 2014-15 for concession in only basic fare of Rajdhani, Shatabdi & Duronto trains instead of in total fares.
- ii. On demand of full berth/seat for the children of 5 years and above and below 12 years, adult fare is charged. In case of no berth option half of the adult fare is charged. No major changes have been made in the unreserved sector. This has been implemented during 2015.
- iii. Concession to foreign national/NRI senior citizens has been withdrawn in 2016.
- iv. No concession is granted in the new category of services like Gatimaan, Humsafar, Antyodaya, Suvidha trains, Special trains on Special charges, Vande Bharat etc.,
- v. No new concessions have been announced since last 6 years.
- vi. In addition to 100% give up option of concessional amount, provision has also been made to give up 50% of the concession amount for senior citizens.
- vii. Further, letters have already been sent to Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (For senior citizen & Divyangjan), Ministry of Health & Family welfare (Patients, Doctors nurses etc.) & Ministry of youth and sports (Sports & Youth) for reimbursement of revenue foregone due to concession being given to above mentioned categories of passengers.

PROLIFERATION OF THE PRS

Indian Railways Catering and Tourist Corporation (IRCTC)

73. As per the Ministry of Railways, around 72 percent of reserved tickets are booked online through IRCTC website and the Mobile App. When asked about the number/percentage of tickets booked through the IRCTC website and through the Mobile App, the Ministry have provided the information as under:

“The percentage share of e-ticket booking during FY 2019-20 is as under:

Mobile App	:	1415 Lakh tickets/47%
Website	:	770 Lakh tickets/26%
Agents	:	741 Lakh tickets/24%
G2G (Defence & CPF)	:	93 Lakh tickets/3%”

74. The Ministry have, however, clarified that the following functions of website are not available in the Mobile App at the moment but are in the process of implementation.

- i. Tax invoice generation facility
- ii. Option of seat available in Alternate trains before booking.
- iii. Foreign Tourist (International) user registration facility.
- iv. Booking facility in FT (Foreign Tourist) quota for foreign users.

75. The Committee were further informed that the reserved tickets booked online through Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) can be cancelled partially online. However, at present, the facility of modification of tickets is not available online and this facility could be availed across computerized PRS counters only.

76. Since the Indian Railways' ticketing inherently includes ticketing by agents, the Committee wanted to know the role of authorised agents for issuing tickets. In this regard, the Ministry have informed that IRCTC appoints Principal Service Providers/ PSPs (Principal agents) as per its policy formulated for the purpose. However, PSPs do not do the retail business. Retail Business of e-ticketing is carried out through retail shops located in markets and are owned & managed by Retail Service Providers (RSPs). The PSPs are authorised to appoint RSPs (sub agents) as per the defined slabs. The RSPs are registered with Unique Mobile Number and Unique e-mail ID and are verified by their Aadhar No. and PAN Card No. at the time of registration. The Ministry have further informed that as a security measure, no two RSP IDs can be created with same Mobile Number and e mail ID.

77. Regarding the monitoring mechanism implemented by the IRCTC to ensure that the authorized agents do not manipulate the system, the Ministry have stated that Principal Service Providers/PSPs (Principal agents) register their respective Retail Service Providers/RSPs (Sub agents) to spread e-ticketing of reserved rail tickets to every corner of the country. The RSPs are registered with Unique Mobile Number and Unique e-mail ID and are verified by their Aadhar No. and PAN Card No. at the time of registration and no two RSP IDs can be created with same Mobile Number and e mail ID.

78. It was further informed that RSP(sub agent) booking is completely restricted for the first 15 minutes from 08:00 to 08:15 hours for opening ARP (Advance Reservation Period) tickets, and from 10:00 to 10:15 hours and 11:00 to 11:15 hours for opening Tatkal tickets for AC and Non AC classes respectively. As an additional measure, only One Tatkal ticket per day/per train is allowed to be booked by Retail Service Providers (agents).

79. Regarding the charges for booking of tickets by agents, it was informed that all authorised RSPs are permitted to charge an Agent Service Charge of Rs.20/- per ticket for 2nd & Sleeper Classes and Rs.40/- per ticket for AC Classes & First Class, irrespective of number of passengers. These charges are inclusive of applicable taxes.

80. One of the gravest problems faced in the ticketing across Indian Railways is the menace of unauthorised agents more commonly known as touts. Touts have for very long been overcharging unsuspecting passengers who unknowingly or due to high demand, purchase tickets from them. In this regard, the Committee wanted to know the actions being taken by the Ministry to check the menace of unscrupulous elements or touts in the booking of e-tickets including Tatkal tickets, the Ministry have informed as under.

- i. Checks have been introduced to ensure that form filling by automatic software is comparable to those filled by human beings.
- ii. Restrictions have been put on creation of IRCTC user id and booking of tickets per user.
- iii. Dynamic CAPTCHA has been introduced at registration, login and booking page.
- iv. Multilayer security and regular audits by Standardization Testing and Quality Certification (STQC).
- v. Restriction on authorized agents of IRCTC(except Defence and Paramilitary Forces) for booking tickets during first fifteen minutes of opening of ARP booking and tatkal booking.
- vi. Individuals are allowed only 2 ARP tickets per user-id from 08:00 Hrs to 10:00Hrs.

- vii. Individuals are allowed only 2 ARP tickets per IP Address from 08:00 to 10:00 hours.
- viii. 120 Days Advance Reservation Period (ARP) check for general ticket. ARP booking not allowed before 08:00 hours.
- ix. Individual users are allowed only 2 Tatkal tickets per user-id from 10:00 Hrs to 12:00 Hrs.
- x. Individual users are allowed only 2 Tatkal tickets per IP from 10:00 to 12:00 hours.
- xi. Random Security question has been implemented to Individual Users for Tatkal Ticket bookings.
- xii. Blocking of Foreign IP addresses at peak time has been done at network level.
- xiii. Individual users are logged out in case enquiries exceed 25 per session during opening hours i.e. from 08:00 to 12:00 hours.
- xiv. Only one (1) booking in one user login session except for return/onward journey between 08:00 and 12:00 hours. To do another booking user needs to logout and login again.
- xv. Only One Tatkal ticket per day/per train is allowed to Retail Service Providers (agents).
- xvi. Individual users are allowed only 6 tickets in a month, unless authenticated through Aadhar in which 12 tickets can be booked in a month to prevent mass bookings by a single user.
- xvii. Only 4 passengers allowed in TATKAL ticket.
- xviii. Incoming day TATKAL booking for AC classes not allowed before 1000 hours.
- xix. Incoming day TATKAL booking for Non-AC classes not allowed before 1100 hours.

81. The Committee have also been informed that as a part of its checks and balances and to strengthen its fight against any malafide in e-ticketing, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) & CRIS carry out continuous monitoring of the users of the e-ticketing application. Based on various investigations and data/time analysis carried out by IRCTC in coordination with CRIS and RPF, about 1.15 Lakh Personal User IDs in FY 2018-19 and about 11.20 Lakh Personal User IDs in FY 2019-20, have been deactivated by IRCTC. The penal action was initiated in coordination with CRIS, through the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

82. In addition, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has been undertaking intensive and continuous action against persons involved in touting at PRS counters (unauthorised carrying on of business of procuring & supply of railway tickets). The Committee were also informed as under:

“Several all India drives i.e. Operation Storm (2018), Operation Thunder (2019) etc. were launched with outstanding results. With the help of query based module PRABAL, RPF accessed PRS data and based on analysis of data obtained clubbed with field inputs, the drive against touts was made focused and effective which led to arrest of 6591 touts and seizure of future tickets worth Rs.25.44 Crores during the period from Jan, 2019 to March, 2020. Operation of several illegal software for touting was detected during these drives. A planned nation-wide co-ordinated action was launched against the suppliers and operators of these illegal software leading to arrest of 104 criminals involved and disruption of several illegal software like I-BALL, RED BULL, ANMS, MAC, N-GATE, CYCLE, STAR-V2 etc. Future confirmed tickets worth Rs.9.92 Crores booked using these software were also got cancelled. The data obtained during the action against illegal software was shared with CRIS and IRCTC and by joint efforts of all departments of Indian Railways, we were able to disrupt the operation of illegal software as of now. RPF will keep working in close co-ordination of CRIS and IRCTC to upgrade the security of

the PRS system in order to thwart the attempt of such software in future too. The drive has again been started from 20th May with start of limited passenger services after the lockdown and RPF has been able to arrest 314 touts with forfeiture of future tickets worth Rs.42.43 lakhs till date.”

The Ministry have assured the Committee that such drives against touts would continue in future.

83. Given that it is relatively easy to create multiple email accounts and procure multiple, the Committee wanted to know how IRCTC ensures agents/sub-agents/touts not to create multiple logins using such credentials, the Ministry have stated that such a question of creation of multiple sub agent Ids by RSPs and multiple user Ids by Individual User does not arise since every Individual User/User ID and RSP (Agent)ID is created with Unique Mobile Number and Unique e-mail ID after due verification through OTP messages on mobile Number and Mail ID. As such no two user IDs can be created on same Mobile Number or same e-mail ID. Further, all RSPs are verified by their Aadhaar Numbers and PAN Card Numbers.

84. Cyber security is one of the most important aspects of internet usage especially when there is financial transaction involved. Since ticketing not only involves financial transactions but also sensitive /financial information is stored in passengers profiles, the Committee wanted to know about the measures being taken towards cyber security of the IRCTC website. The Ministry have informed as under:

“They have implemented a multilayered security in the New Generation Ticketing (NGET) system, which involves provision of security infrastructure such as Firewalls, Intrusion Prevention System (IPS), Web Application Firewalls, Access Control Filters & Security hardening, Security Zoning, Security Information and Event Management tool and Host Intrusion Prevention Systems. Security is also implemented in PRS at the system side including operating system, application software and also at application level for handling OWASP (Open Web Application Security Project) threats as well as Spring security framework for authentication and authorization. Auth 2.0. authorization framework enabling a third-party application to obtain limited access to an HTTP service, has been implemented for secure authorization in both Website and Mobile App.”

85. With respect to protecting Passenger profile information from Bulk access/download from the internals DBA Users, the Ministry informed that they were taking the steps as follows:

- i. Created named user for Database users of CRIS & IRCTC with desired Roles and Privileges with defined Tables access.
- ii. Identification of Tables and Attributes for critical /user data and masking.
- iii. Capturing of Audit Logs for high privileged users, including DBAs.
- iv. Data Based Administration (DBA) User logs were send to Security Information and Event Management (SIEM).
- v. Disabling of critical column access to Database users
- vi. Password Function implemented.
- vii. Encrypted Database backups have been configured.

86. The Committee were also apprised that as an additional layer of security the IRCTC e- ticketing website (www.irctc.co.in), - is got periodically audited by STQC (Standardization, Testing & Quality Certification) Directorate, Ministry of Electronics & Communication Technology (MeitY), Govt. of India, which includes- Web Application Security Assessment, Vulnerability Assessment (VA) of hosts, and Penetration Testing (PT) of application/hosts to keep the NGeT system free of security vulnerabilities. On-line payment on E-ticketing system is fully secured as Credit/Debit Card data of users are neither captured nor stored in IRCTC system. The Ministry have assured that all user data is protected through end to end encryption between user and IRCTC servers using Secure Sockets Layer (SSL)/ Transport Layer Security (TLS) certificates.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

87. The Committee enquired about the travel insurance being offered by the IRCTC on train journeys and the extent of the cover. In reply, the Ministry have submitted as under:

“The extent of Travel Insurance cover is as under:

Death & Total Disability	-	Rs. 10 Lakhs
Partial Disability	-	Rs. 7.5 Lakhs
Hospitalization Expenses for Injury.	-	Rs. 2 Lakhs
Transportation of Mortal Remains.	-	Rs.10,000”

88. It was elaborated that while travel insurance mechanism is not built into the PRS but it is part of NGeT System and is meant for travelers booking their tickets online.

89. The Committee wanted to have details regarding the total amount collected as premium in the last 3 years. In this regard, the Ministry have furnished information as below:

Total Premium Amount Collected in Last Three Years		
Financial Year	Total No. Of Passengers Opted Travel Insurance (Nos. in Cr.)	Total Premium (Rs.in Cr.) (with GST)
2017-18*	39.33	0.00
2018-19*	34.40	8.53
2019-20	27.30	13.38
Total	101.03	21.90

90. It was, however, clarified that free Travel Insurance was provided to all the passengers on account of Government’s initiative of digital promotion w.e.f. 10.12.2016 to 31.08.2018. W.e.f. 01.09.2018, Travel Insurance was made optional and to be paid by passenger, Insurance premium is Rs.0.49/- per passenger.

91. As part of the cyber security apparatus of the travel insurance mechanism and especially since Railways utilize third party for coverage of insurance, the Committee wanted to know whether, this does not make the PRS vulnerable to cyber-attacks and the safe guards that have been installed for

detering cyber-attacks/data theft in such instances, the Ministry, in a reply, have stated that the third party integration for insurance are done with the IRCTC system (NGET) and there is no integration of same with PRS(CONCERT) system. Therefore, PRS is not vulnerable to cyber-attacks due to third party insurances. The integration done with IRCTC also is one way in an outbound manner through APIs provided by Travel insurance companies.

92. To a query whether IRCTC has received any claims for insurance and the details of the amount disbursed, so far, during the last three years specifying the time limit of disbursement vis-à-vis claims, the Ministry have submitted as under:

“IRCTC has not received any claims. Claims are being processed and paid by the Insurance Companies directly to the claimants. Claims paid by insurance companies to the victims or family members for the last three years are as follows:

Period	Amount (Rs in crores)
2017-18	3.59
2018-19	6.12
2019-20	3.73

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

93. Grievance redressal mechanism is the cornerstone of any service which is related to public dealing. In this regard, the Committee wanted to know the mechanism that has been put into place for making complaints on PRS/ticket booking. In response, the Ministry have assured that Indian Railways has a well-established system for registering and redressing grievances. For Offline (manual) grievances, complaint registers are available at stations and in trains. It was further informed that recently RailMadad was launched merging all Online and Offline channels of grievances into a single platform. RailMadad replaces erstwhile CoMS and converges Online modes of grievances like Web, APP, SMS, Phone & Social Media, and also provides option for uploading offline complaints. They have further stated that Rail-Madad has an inbuilt system for monitoring time and quality of redressal. All complaints coming in RailMadad are automatically routed to the concerned field staff for faster redressal. The system also provides for in-depth MIS reports which enable Railway managers to analyze root-cause for making of system improved. Further, the customers feedback received are also monitored and analyzed for effective disposal. To a response on the number of such complaints received on a daily basis, it was informed that Railways had received an average of 354 reserved ticketing complaints per day in FY 2019-20.

94. The Committee also wanted to know the average time taken for redressal of all such complaints. The have stated that all out efforts are being made to redress complaints on PRS ticket bookings and that reserved ticketing complaints were disposed within an average time of 17.81 hrs in FY 2019-20.

PART-II

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS

1. The Committee note that the Indian railways not only provide the most economical and environment friendly mode of transport but also play a vital role in socio-economic development of the country. They cover a long way to carry about 23 million passengers per day with their 13,500 passenger trains. With this magnitude of passengers it becomes imperative on the part of Railways to facilitate their passengers with a proper system of booking tickets from any station to travel anywhere in the country in their coaches. The Committee find that the Passenger Reservation System (PRS), the main customer facing application of the Indian Railways, has been functional over the last three decades. Moving from the manual mode of PRS to Integrated Multiple Train Passenger Reservation System (IMPRESS), the Indian Railways have now shifted to a new ticketing software i.e. Country Wide Network for Computerized Enhanced Reservation and Ticketing (CONCERT) system duly maintained by the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS). The Committee are of the opinion that the emergence of new software has not only reduced the processing time manifold but also gave the rail users the opportunity to get real time information on all trains on their preferred route/destination as well as current position of waitlisted tickets etc. enabling them greater flexibility in planning their journeys which were not possible with the manual system of ticketing. The Committee are also of the opinion that with the advent of the PRS, mal-practices in ticketing have been curbed to a very large extent.
2. Though the Committee appreciate the initiative of the Railways of launching the new software for booking tickets, yet they note that lakhs of passengers are left in lurch per day due to non-confirmation of their waitlisted tickets due to one reason or another. They are forced to opt for other modes of transport like bus and airlines etc. resulting into loss to railway exchequer. The Committee, therefore, recommend that given the current scenario of railway finances coupled with growing customer expectations and conveniences especially in the face of increasing competition from road and low-cost airlines, the Indian Railways should make all out efforts to make their ticketing system more robust and weed out inherent deficiencies that hinder the process of ticketing with the ultimate aim of passenger convenience and passenger satisfaction. The Committee would also like the Railways to address the various technical, financial and resource constraints which hamper the working of its passenger reservation system.
3. The Committee would like to stress that while certain deficiencies in PRS like difficult access, lower speed and efficiency are detrimental to its smart functioning, yet grave issues like possibility of unethical practices and blatant contravening of rules by agents etc. may erode the credibility of the Indian railways and dilute their public

image. The Committee wish to point out the Ministry that the Indian Railways, being the backbone of the nation-wide transport system in the country carrying millions of passengers every day, any manipulation in reservation system would not only affect their journey but also impact upon their lives too either directly or indirectly. To this end, the Committee, therefore, would like the Ministry to explore more robust ticketing systems currently in vogue in countries having high rail density/rail users and adopt best practices commensurate to that system to strengthen the Indian Railways passenger reservation system. They also desire the Ministry to explore the possibilities to collaborate with renowned institutions/premier institutes of repute /organizations with a view to upgrade and refine the PRS in Indian Railways.

4. The Committee find that currently Indian Railways have more than 4043 reservation centres with over 10725 terminals across the country. These include major stations, non-rail heads and other locations such as tourist centres and district headquarters etc. They note that though the Railways have made all out efforts to proliferate the reservation centres all over the network, yet the Committee are not satisfied with these numbers keeping in view the immense length and breadth of the country. The Committee would like the Ministry to take proactive actions to further proliferate these centres across the country and explore the possibilities of mobile PRS etc. to get them reach to non-rail head centres especially in remote locations having poor or no road/internet connectivity till a stable PRS is set up there so that passengers of these areas are also benefited at par with other areas of the country. The Committee would also like to suggest the Ministry to cover the sites of Technical hubs/professional colleges (engineering, medical etc.), large industrial units, manufacturing plants etc. having sizable migrant population to help them to fulfil their travel needs.
5. The Committee note that while there are several options available with the passengers for booking of reserved tickets for travelling on Indian Railways such as PRS counters, Postal PRS counters, Yatri Ticket Suvudha Kendras, etc., yet the majority of tickets are booked online through the IRCTC website/ app which is one of the most convenient modes of passenger reservation. The Committee find that the reserved tickets booked online through IRCTC website/app during 2019-20 is three times greater than that of tickets purchased at physical locations. However, this website is usually slow and particularly during rush hours considerable time is consumed in booking a ticket through it. The Committee would like to point out that e-ticketing facility is not only convenient for the passengers but also helps in decongesting railway counters and eliminates the menace of touts as well as the possibility of receipt of fake currency at counters. Therefore, the Committee would like to impress upon the Ministry the need of regularly strengthening and upgrading the capacity of the IRCTC website/servers so as to make it more robust to handle greater traffic with minimal turnaround time. They would also like to be apprised of the actions taken in this regard.

6. The Committee note that currently the PRS processes over one crore transactions per day involving about 5 crore passengers on an average. Though the system has been empowered to handle a maximum of 28,000 transactions per minute (TPM), yet the average transaction per minute for the year 2019-20 was about 8711. The Committee, therefore, desire the Ministry to act proactively and take all preparedness to further strengthen the capacity of server/website to yield desired results so that no hardship is faced by the users on this count.
7. The Ministry have informed that PRS can be used for booking, modification and cancellation of tickets in various categories of trains. They note that rail tickets can be booked 120 days prior to the date of scheduled journey known as the Advanced Reserved Period for almost all long-distance mail express trains/Shatabdi express trains except some short distance/inter-city trains. The accommodation through the PRS is allotted on first come first serve basis and thereafter reservation against cancellation (RAC) and waitlisted tickets are issued. The status of RAC tickets gets updated automatically against cancellation of confirmed tickets. The Committee also find that tickets can be booked online as well as through computerised PRS counters till the preparation of second reservation charts which are prepared between 30 minutes and 5 minutes before the scheduled time of departure of the train. The Committee, however, find no logic in booking of tickets between the time of 30-5 minutes before the departure of the train when there are thousands of RAC/waitlisted tickets already booked and waiting for confirmation. In their opinion, there is no scope of getting these tickets confirmed. The Committee, therefore, are of the opinion that since Tatkal facilities are available for passengers wishing to travel at a short notice, all seats of the train found vacant after preparation of the first reservation chart which are prepared 4-5 hours before the departure time should automatically be allotted to RAC/Waitlisted passengers to facilitate them to travel as per their plan. The Committee, therefore, desire that the need for preparation of second reservation charts should reviewed with a view to facilitate the needy passengers and also to refrain the touts from being involved in the probable mal-practice during the last minute rush.
8. The Committee note that, as at present, in case a vacancy arises on account of passenger no-show, the same is allotted by on-board ticket checking staff to RAC passenger. The Committee are happy to find that the railways have facilitated the Train Ticket Examinees with the hand held terminals for ease of booking available seats and to ensure automation so as to bring more transparency in their functioning. Sometimes, these staff do not co-operate with the passengers in addressing their queries. Since they have overall control over it and also it is not feasible for them to interact/respond each and every passenger's queries the Committee would like the Ministry to put in place some mechanism in the respective coaches so that

passengers could approach straight and witness the current status of seat/berth confirmation. They would also like to update information on real time basis for greater transparency in the allocation of vacant seats/berths onboard trains.

9. The Committee note that Tatkal Scheme was introduced to provide reservation to those passengers who have to undertake journey at short notice. Tatkal ticket is booked on payment of premium charges on 'first come-first-served' basis. Currently, this is booked from 1000 hrs. on the previous day of the journey for AC Classes and at 1100 hrs. for non-AC Classes at Passenger Reservation System (PRS) and Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) website. The Committee further note that Tatkal charges are levied at the rate of 10% of basic fare for second class and 30% of basic fare for all other classes subject to minimum and maximum charges. For example, for a minimum distance of 100 kms a second sitting reserved class ticket will accrue a minimum Tatkal charge of Rs.10 and a maximum of Rs.15 over and above base fare. Similarly, in the Executive class for a minimum distance of 250 kms, the Tatkal charges will range between Rs.400 and Rs.500. The Committee while appreciating the scheme which is particularly aimed at meeting the urgent/ emergent travel requirement of passengers, are apprehensive over the possible involvement of touts whose unscrupulous activities may inhibit bonafide passengers to avail the benefits of this scheme. The Committee are of the opinion that Railways should be ever vigilant to threats posed by these elements in both the physical and cyber sphere. They, therefore, recommend the Ministry to put in place a stringent monitoring mechanism to curb the misuse of the scheme and refrain the unscrupulous elements/touts from being involved.
10. The Committee are of the considered view that the Indian Railways as a part of social service obligation, provide the cheaper mode of transport to a huge magnitude of passengers per day. However, the Tatkal scheme provides much needed relief to the people having urgent need to travel by paying premium charges. In the opinion of the Committee, the charges levied on the tatkal tickets a little unjustifiable and putting a huge burden particularly on those passengers who are financially weak and are forced to travel in urgency to meet their kith and kin or so for a very short distance also. The Committee desire the Ministry to devise a measures for a pro rata fare for the distance travelled. The Committee note that most of the tatkal tickets are booked online. The passengers opting to book tickets at PRS counters physically are facing problems and the accommodation availability exhausted when their turn comes after a long queue. They would like to suggest the Ministry to provide a fix quota for Tatkal reservations at PRS counters so that the passengers having no internet access and visiting PRS counters for the needful could book a ticket. Such a step would let them avail the benefits of Tatkal ticket reservation in a more impartial and just manner.

11. The Committee are glad to note that the Indian Railways have launched the VIKALP scheme or alternate train accommodation system to help wait listed passengers to get a vacant berth in another train running on the same route whose time of departure is upto 72 hours from the date of journey of the original ticket. The Committee also note that the Vikalp option which has primarily been brought forward to assure a seat on the route selected by the passengers, has been well received by the passengers having not only an option of not only getting a reserved seat/berth but also of securing a higher accommodation in one of the elite trains. The Committee are happy to note with satisfaction that the Railways which were earlier plagued by huge waiting-lists, have found a panacea to this chronic problem. The Committee would, however, like to recommend the Ministry to continue this scheme and find out the rationale behind heavy patronage and utmost importance given to that popular train for travel by the passengers and on the other hand lesser attention given to trains having vacant seats/berths for accommodating VIKALP opting passengers. In their opinion, the arrival/departure timings, punctuality, travel time, station of origin/destination, halts, facilities/amenities etc. may be the factors for popularity of the trains resulting in waitlisted passengers. The Committee feel that if corrective actions are taken to provide similar conditions to Vikalp trains running on the same route, it would not only increase ridership but also reduce the waiting lists on popular trains enabling a larger number of people to travel.
12. The Ministry have informed that the Flexi fare scheme has been introduced in Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Durgam Cheruvu trains in 2016. Under this scheme, the fare is increased by 10% with every 10% of berths sold subject to a maximum limit of 1.5 times in second AC classes, sleeper, second sitting reserved, AC chair car and 1.4 times in AC third class. The Committee note that while no change has been made in the fare of AC first and executive classes but based on the feedback received on the scheme, the railways have now rationalised the scheme. The Flexi fare scheme has now been discontinued from 15 trains till further review and from 32 trains during a pre-defined lean period of three months (February, March and August). Moreover the maximum gap of Flexi fares has been reduced from 1.5 times to 1.4 times in all Flexi fare applicable classes. In addition to these measures, the Railways are now offering meaningful discounts where class -wise occupancy is less than 60% four days prior to the scheduled departure of trains. Though the Committee are happy to note that the Indian Railways are now rationalising Flexi fares yet they are constrained to note that flexi/dynamic pricing appears to be somewhat discriminatory given the facts that fares of the Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Durgam Cheruvu are already higher as compared to other mail and express trains and are almost at par and at some instances higher than those of budget airlines. The Committee are of the view that with an enhanced fare structure in place, passengers with modest income or the financially disadvantaged rail users may

not be able to afford these fares and may not opt for these trains. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should, in greater public interest, review the flexi/dynamic fare mechanism and take a prudent decision of pricing of fares which are balanced and based on equal footing.

13. The Committee note that as part of their Social Service Obligations, the Indian Railways extends concession in passenger fare to more than 50 categories of passengers. The element of concession varies from 10% to 100% and are permitted for certain categories of Divyang passengers, 11 types of patients, senior citizens, freedom fighters, Press correspondents, war widows, sports persons etc. The Committee also find that the Indian Railways also provides concessions to railway employees by way of Privilege Passes /Privilege Ticket Order and complimentary passes. The Committee further find that the quantum of revenue forgone in the passenger earnings segment as a result of concessions was Rs.1,670 cr during 2016-17, Rs.1,810 cr during 2017-18 and Rs.1,995 cr during 2018-19 which is a substantial burden on the Railway finances. The Committee feel that while concessions are required to maintain social equity, yet given the precarious finances of the Indian Railways and especially in respect of the dismal earnings of their passenger segment, there is an urgent need to assess its impact on their finances. The Committee would like to recommend the Ministry to take proactive steps to review the criterion for granting of concessions with a view to contain the amount of concessions granted. They also desire the Ministry to have an internal mechanism in place to exercise control over the misuse of Privilege Passes /Privilege Ticket Order and complimentary passes by their employees and punitive action taken wherever required.
14. The Committee note that while senior citizens are granted a fare concession amounting to 40-50 percent of their fare on the other hand, offered 'give up' scheme to forego the concession and pay full fare if he/she so desires. It is seen that those who can afford to pay full fare, are availing the concession. The Committee while appreciating the scheme would like to suggest the Ministry to give a wider publicity of the scheme and create awareness among the senior citizens so that only deserving passengers could avail the benefit. The Committee would like to be kept informed of the action taken in this regard.
15. The Committee find that the Ministry does not maintain any separate data regarding the number of Privilege Passes/PTOs and complimentary passes issued to railway employees and the number of persons who availed them. They even do not maintain data of revenue lost as a result of such concessions. The Committee do not concur with the reasoning of the Ministry. While fully acknowledging the fact that certain concessions may be granted by the transporter, they would like to point out that the revenue expenditure of the Indian Railways have to be met entirely out of their internal resources and any misappropriation of such concessions may erode their internal

finances. Therefore, the Committee would like to impress upon the Ministry to act proactively and make adequate provisions and take stringent steps to prevent the abuse of such privileges to the extent possible. To this end, the Committee would also like the Ministry to include the expense in their accounting so that it correctly reflects their revenue expenditure.

16. The Committee note that Indian Railways provides concessions to freedom fighters and their widows. The Committee appreciate this initiative of the Ministry and are of the firm opinion that this noble service of the Railways is an apt tribute for the trials and tribulation borne by our freedom fighters for gaining incredible independence. The Committee note that Complimentary Card Passes are issued on lifetime basis free rail travel in First Class and 2AC along with one companion in the same class by any train over all Indian Railways except Metro Railway, Kolkata. The Committee find that from 2016-18, a total of 10435 Complimentary Card Passes have been issued. The Committee observe that almost 75 years have elapsed since independence and any freedom fighter has to be in the age group of more than 85-90 years. Though, a hefty expenditure of Rs.33,68,21,743 is reimbursed by the Ministry of Home Affairs on this count, the Committee wish to stress the need to have genuine proof for identification of the intended users with a view to prevent the misuse of the Scheme. The Committee, therefore, desire the Ministry to be vigilant and take stringent actions to avoid misuse of these passes and undertake regular audit. They also desire to arrange issuance of smart cards to bona-fide pass holders.
17. The Committee find that under the PRS, around three-fourth of the tickets are booked through the IRCTC website or the mobile app. The Committee note that Tickets can either be booked by the individual or by Principal Service Providers/PSPs (Principal agents) or their respective Retail Service Providers/RSPs (Sub agents) who are the license holder agents authorized by the Ministry of Railways to procure Rail tickets on behalf of passengers by charging nominal service charges from passengers fixed by the Railways from time to time. The Committee note that the Railways have taken all out efforts to deter the manipulation. They appreciate the additional measures taken by them to allow the Retail Service Providers (agents) to book only one Tatkal ticket per day/per train. The Committee are of the firm opinion that such an initiative may go a long way in discouraging unauthorized booking agents as Aadhar Number and PAN are unique to each citizen and can not be used many times and any irregularity committed in respect of the PRS, cannot continue without active involvement of touts/connivance of the officials manning the PRS. The Committee, therefore, desire the Railways to investigate all such cases of irregularities in a time bound manner and take deterrent punitive action against those found guilty.
18. In order to strengthen the fight against any malafide in e-ticketing and as a part of its checks and balances, the Committee find that the Railways have initiated a number of

steps to de-register the suspected accounts/Ids of malafide users. In this regard, the IRCTC has deactivated 1.15 Lakh Personal User IDs in FY 2018-19, and about 11.20 Lakh Personal User IDs in FY 2019-20. The Committee appreciate this initiative of the Ministry and urge them to maintain the momentum and weed out such accounts on a day to day basis.

New Delhi;
26 November, 2021
5 Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

RADHA MOHAN SINGH
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Railways

**MINUTES OF THE TENTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS
(2019-20)**

The Committee met on Friday, the 13th March, 2020 from 1500 hrs. to 1610 hrs. in Committee Room No. 2, Parliament House Annexe Extension, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Radha Mohan Singh - Chairperson

MEMBERS**LOK SABHA**

2. Shri Pankaj Choudhary
3. Smt. Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo
4. Smt. Diya Kumari
5. Shri Anubhav Mohanty
6. Smt. Queen Oja
7. Smt. Keshari Devi Patel
8. Shri Mukesh Rajput
9. Shri Sumedhanand Saraswati
10. Shri Gopal Jee Thakur

RAJYA SABHA

11. Ms. Saroj Pandey
12. Shri Ashok Siddharth

SECRETARIAT

1. Dr. Kavita Prasad - Joint Secretary
2. Shri Arun K. Kaushik - Director
3. Shri Ram Lal Yadav - Addl. Director
4. Smt. Archana Srivastva - Deputy Secretary

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAILWAY BOARD)

1.	Shri Vinod Kumar Yadav	Chairman, Railway Board & Ex-officio Principal Secretary to the Government of India
2.	Shri Vishwesh Chaube	Member Engineering, Railway Board & Ex-officio Secretary to the Government of India
3.	Shri Arun Kumar	Director General/Railway Protection Force
4.	Shri O.P. Singh	Principal Executive Director/ Station Development Engineering
5.	Shri N. Madhusudan Rao	Principal Executive Director/ Commercial (Rates and Marketing)

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) to the sitting and invited their attention to the provisions contained in Direction 55 of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha regarding the confidentiality of the proceedings.

3. Thereafter, the Committee took evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) in connection with examination of the subject "Passenger Reservation System of Indian Railways".

4. The Chairman, Railway Board briefed the Committee about some of the salient features of passenger amenities provided by the Railways at various categories of railway stations in Indian Railways. He also informed the Committee about the status of modernization of Railway stations including Modern Stations, Model Stations, Adarsh stations and World Class Stations. The Committee broadly discussed the issues related to categorization of stations, improvement of amenities including cleanliness at stations as well as onboard and prevention of slippages, providing greater amenities at halt stations, improvement in quality/cleanliness of linen provided in trains etc.

5. The Committee, then, sought certain clarifications on the issues related to the subject. The Chairman, Railway Board replied to some of the queries and assured to send the written replies to the queries in respect of which the information was not readily available with him. The evidence was concluded.

6. A verbatim record of the proceedings of the Committee has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

**MINUTES OF THE SECOND SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS
(2021-22)**

The Committee met on Friday, the 26th November, 2021 from 1500 hrs. to 1600 hrs. in Room No. 53, Parliament House, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Radha Mohan Singh - Chairperson

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri Sunil Kumar Mondal
3. Shri Achyutananda Samanta
4. Shri Sumedhanand Saraswati
5. Shri Arvind Ganpat Sawant
6. Shri Gopaljee Thakur

RAJYA SABHA

7. Shri Narhari Amin
8. Smt. Phulo Devi Netam
9. Ms. Saroj Pandey
10. Shri Ashok Siddharth
11. Prof. Manoj Kumar Jha

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Prasenjit Singh - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Arun K. Kaushik - Director
3. Smt. Archana Srivastva - Deputy Secretary

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAILWAY BOARD)

1.	Sh. Suneet Sharma	Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Railway Board & Ex. –officio Principal Secretary to the Government of India.
2.	Sh. Sanjeev Mittal	Member (Infrastructure), Railway Board & Ex. - officio Secretary to the Government of India.
3	Sh. Ram Prakash	Additional Member, Railway Electrification
4	Sh. Rahul Agarwal	Additional Member, Signal

