

**Speech of Shri Ram Vilas Paswan
Introducing the Railway Budget
for 1997-98 on 26th February, 1997**

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

I rise to present the Revised Estimates for 1996-97 and Budget Estimates for 1997-98 for the Indian Railways.

2. Before I present a review of the performance during the current year, I wish to apprise this august House that during the presentation of Railway Budget for 1996-97, I had clearly mentioned that we want the Railways to function not only as a commercial institution but also an efficient and public welfare organisation for the development of backward regions.

3. Even after fifty years of independence, be it the north east regions of Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh or Sikkim, railways have not reached these States. Similarly, Kashmir also does not have any railway line. The region of Bihar adjoining Nepal and Uttrakhand are also backward as far as railway network is concerned. In my opinion, it will not be possible to develop rail infrastructure in these backward regions as long as financial viability of a railway line is the norm and these regions will continue to remain backward.

4. Keeping these in view, our Government in the last nine months have decided to construct Udhampur - Baramulla railway line in Jammu & Kashmir State and Kumarghat - Agartala, Lumding - Silchar, Harmuti - Itanagar and Bogibeel Bridge on Brahmaputra river in North East region. We are also providing sufficient funds for completion of these projects. We are making a provision of Rs.400 cr. as against Rs.220 cr. for the last year. This is the highest ever provision made for new lines. More than Rs.300 cr. have been allotted for development and expansion of rail infrastructure in North Eastern States alone. More than Rs.100 cr. have been provided for expansion of railway line in Jammu & Kashmir this year. Similarly, we have provided increased outlays as far as possible for the backward regions of different States. Details of these provisions have been given in the Pink Book.

5. On the one hand, development of backward regions is being stressed, on the other the need to gradually increase the transportation capacity of railways for freight and passenger traffic is also being kept in view to meet the growing demand. The House would be happy to know that this year we made a provision of Rs.4100 cr. to be spent on rolling stock as against a provision of Rs.2900 cr. during 1995-96. We have provided necessary funds for procurement of 26,000 wagons, more than 2000 passenger coaches and more than 300 locos during the year 1997-98. We are quite hopeful that this will enable us to discharge our role in the sphere of transport and contribute to economic progress of the nation.

6. With the permission of the House, I would like to apprise the difficult conditions under which I, as Railway Minister, have to present this Budget. 16 lakh people work in railways, which is 40% of the total Central Government employees. On the one hand, Fifth Pay Commission recommendations will result in an unprecedented rise in working expenses to the extent of Rs. 3500 cr., on the other, there have been regular demands from Hon'ble members for expansion and development of new lines. I can assure you that but for this additional burden of Rs. 3500 cr., the pace of development would have been much more despite all constraints. I requested the Hon'ble Finance Minister, Planning Commission and the Hon'ble Prime Minister for increasing the budgetary support. I would like to thank the Prime Minister, Shri H.D. Deve Gowda ji who not only gave encouragement but also increased the budgetary support despite all financial problems. I also thank the Finance Minister who despite all constraints, gave the budgetary support of Rs.1831 cr. The Hon'ble Prime Minister has given an assurance that in order to complete various projects for development of backward regions, he will try to extend maximum possible financial support in future.

7. I have no hesitation in informing this august House that Indian Railways are passing through a very difficult phase. Whereas there are separate tracks for goods and passenger traffic in developed countries, in India, barring exceptions, the track is common for goods, passenger, express and superfast trains. Railway network spans more than 62,000 route kilometers and one lakh seven thousand track kilometers. There is also a need for 10 per cent track renewal. In addition to this replacement of 20,000 wagons, 2,000 coaches and many locomotives is required to be done every year due to over age. There are 24,554 unmanned level crossings. All these require enormous resources, which are beyond the capacity of Railways keeping in view the resource crunch. However, we are doing our best with in limited resources and I am proud to say that Indian Railways is the only one in the World Railways which is making

profit after meeting all expenses and is using the resources for development of Railways.

Traffic Performance 1996-97

8. Indian Railways had achieved a loading of 390 million tonnes during 1995-96 and for the year 1996-97, target of 410 million tonnes of revenue earning freight traffic was fixed. Railways are fully poised to achieve this target during the current year despite shortfall in offer of traffic during the season.

Financial Performance 1996-97

9. The financial performance of Indian Railways in the current year has been satisfactory. The "Excess" of Rs.1916 cr. as projected in the Budget Estimates has now been revised upward to Rs.2241 cr. The Annual Plan which was initially fixed at Rs.8130 cr. was modified to Rs.8300 cr. on grant of additional budgetary support of Rs.170 cr. from the General Exchequer. The Railways had invited private investment, as was done last year, through 'BOLT' and 'OYW' schemes. In the last year, the response to BOLT was disappointing but in 'OYW' private investment was very encouraging. Rs. 530 cr. are expected to materialise this year in these schemes. IRFC has already made available approximately Rs. 1500 cr. and it is expected that it will exceed its target of Rs. 1850 cr. for the current year.

Traffic Prospects 1997-98

10. A target of 430 million tonnes of revenue earning freight traffic has been fixed for 1997-98, which is the first year of the 9th Five Year Plan. This is 20 million tonnes more than the loading target of 1996-97. We hope to achieve this target during the year with the likely boost in the economic progress.

11. There has been commendable increase in passenger traffic during 1996-97 and we hope to achieve the target of 3% increase during 1997-98.

Passenger Services

12. I would like to apprise the Hon'ble members about the steps taken by the railways for the benefit of rail users.

- i. Mr. Speaker, computerisation of passenger reservations has been in existence for many years. This has been widely acclaimed publicly as well as by this august House. This facility has already been provided at 271 locations to end of 1995.96. By March, 1997, this would be available at more than 300 locations. I am happy to inform the Hon'ble members that this facility has been provided at even those places which are not even connected by rail like Srinagar, Port Blair, Panjim, Shillong, Agartala, Imphal, and Gangtok, etc. This facility has also been installed at Aizawl, Itanagar and Kohima but efforts to make them operational are being made. This has been hailed by the people of these areas as an extremely customer-friendly gesture on the part of Indian Railways. Aizawl, Itanagar, Kohima
- ii. Now demands are being raised for providing universal facility of return and onward reservations covering all computerised locations. A networking software is under development to meet this demand. This software has been operational at New Delhi and Secunderabad PRS and efforts are on for networking of these systems. Efforts to extend this system to the other three locations viz. Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai are also being made.
- iii. I had given an assurance last time in this august House that to improve customer satisfaction, efforts would be made to introduce satellite based telephone services on long distance trains. I am happy to inform that this facility has been successfully introduced on Mumbai-Delhi Rajdhani Express and I have decided to provide this on all the Rajdhani by the end of next year.
- iv. Monitoring cells have been set up at zonal headquarters and ministry's level for ensuring passenger amenities, cleanliness, catering and punctuality.
- v. I had announced in my last Budget Speech that AC 2-tier/AC 3-tier accommodation will be provided on all mail/express involving overnight journey in a phased manner. I am glad to inform the august House that 15 pairs of such trains have been provided with AC 2-tier accommodation since October, 96 and this will be progressively increased on the availability of more AC Coaches. AC 3-Tier coaches are now operating on all Rajdhani Express trains and 51 pairs of other mail/express trains.
- vi. I had given an assurance in the last Budget that at least two unreserved second class coaches would be attached to mail/express trains. These unreserved coaches have been attached to many trains during the last year and will be progressively provided.

Public Grievances

13. Everyday, 16 lakhs railway employees toil day and night to run 7500 passenger trains and provide services to 11 million passengers every day. It is quite natural that there are complaints despite all our best efforts. For redressal of these grievances, public grievances cell are functioning not only at Zonal level, at Ministry level also due attention is being paid. I have also set up a complaint cell under my supervision which is making all efforts to bring improvement. Timely and remedial action is being taken in all

cases of complaint.

Catering Services

14. Despite all efforts to provide catering facilities to the passengers, complaints are being received. The position is still not satisfactory although strict action has been taken against railway employees and private contractors in several cases. Other options for improving catering are also being explored. In order to further improve the catering services, staffs are being suitably trained and professionally qualified degree/diploma holders staffs have also been recruited.

15. Pantry car services have been introduced on the six new trains during the current year :

- (i) 2309/2310 New Delhi-Patna Rajdhani Express
- (ii) 8001/8002 Howrah-Mumbai Mail
- (iii) 2633/2634 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Chennai Rajdhani Express
- (iv) 9767/9768 Jaipur-Chennai Express
- (v) 8561/8562 Kazipet-Vishakhapatnam-Kazipet Link Express
- (vi) 9769/9770 Jaipur-Purna-Jaipur Express

16. It has also been decided to introduce Pantry Car Services on some more trains, such as, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminal to Ferozepur - Punjab Mail, Nizamuddin to Visakhapatnam - Samta Express, and Bokaro to Alleppy Express etc.

Safety

17. Rail accidents are most painful for the Railway Minister. Some of the accidents are beyond the control of Railways like sabotage, bomb blasts and terrorist activities. Railway Protection Force cannot interfere in these cases as law and order is a state subject. This subject was intensively discussed for two days in last September with D.G./Police of several states, D.G./RPF and officials of Railway Board. We have written to the concerned State Government for seeking their support and I am quite hopeful that they take necessary steps.

18. As against 360 deaths in rail accidents during the period June, 1995 to January, 1996, the casualties have come down to 3 since June, 1996. Although there is comparative reduction in derailments, yet this does not provide any relief.

19. Mr. Speaker, safety in train operation is being accorded the highest priority and improvement in this direction is an on-going process. During the year upto January, there were 306 accidents against 313 during the same period last year.

20. Sabotage has been the cause of many serious accidents. Bomb blast between Kokrajhar and Fakiragram in Assam on 30.12.96 resulted in derailment of Brahmaputra Mail and loss of 33 lives. Bomb blast in Jhelum Express at Ambala Cantt. on 2nd December, 1996 resulted in death of 10 passengers. During the year up to January, 1997 there have been 12 sabotage cases. We have requested the State Governments to improve the law and order situation and tighten up security arrangements to avoid such accidents.

21. Another area of concern has been level crossing accidents due to rash and careless driving of road vehicles. 43 such accidents have occurred till January, 1997. There is need for strict screening by State Governments while giving licences to the road vehicle drivers.

Annual Plan, 1997-98

22. The plan outlay for 1997-98 has been fixed at Rs.8300 cr. For the year 1997-98 the budgetary support is Rs.1831 cr. which is approximately Rs.400 cr. higher than 1996-97 budgetary support. I am thankful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Finance Minister for increasing this amount. I hope this amount will be further increased in future. An amount of Rs.3419 cr. will be internally generated by the Railways to finance the plan outlay. Remaining amount of Rs.3050 cr. is proposed to be raised through the issue of bonds by Indian Railway Finance Corporation and private investment under BOLT/OYW schemes.

23. Like last year, this year also the thrust will be on augmentation and updating of rolling stock, doubling, track renewals, gauge conversion, electrification and new lines.

Projects of New Lines, Doubling and Gauge Conversion etc.

New Lines

24. During the current year, we have completed the construction of Beas-Goindwal new line, Chitauni-Bagha rail link and Karanjali-Nischintapur line.

25. There have been pressing demands from Hon'ble members from all parts of the country and from the State Governments for taking up new line projects. As you are all aware our Government took a policy decision to accord top priority to the development of rail infrastructure in backward areas, particularly in the North Eastern Region. In pursuance to this policy, we had included the construction of several new lines in the Supplementary Budget, 96-97, with the proviso that work would be started on these as soon as the necessary clearances have been obtained. I am happy to inform the House that the required clearances for taking up the work have since been obtained for most of these projects including new lines from Harmuti-Itanagar, Hassan to Bangalore via Shravanbelagola, Khagaria to Kusheshwarsthan and Hubli to Ankola, as well as for the project of construction of a new line from Lohardanga to Tori. Necessary action has been initiated for obtaining the clearance for Karur-Salem new line and work on this project would be started after obtaining the same.

26. While presenting the last Budget, I had indicated that Government have decided to take up the construction of Brahmapurtra Bridge at Bogibeel near Dibrugarh and Ganga Bridge at Patna. The Prime Minister has since laid the foundation stones for these works and these works are now being included in the Budget, with sufficient outlay for taking up the land acquisition work. The actual work on these bridges would be taken up once the land becomes available. In the meantime, the funding pattern of these bridges is also being sorted out, including the cost sharing for the Bogibeel Bridge with the other beneficiaries, since this is going to be a rail-cum-road bridge.

27. In pursuance of our policy to rail link the capitals of the N.E. States, I had included the work of Kumarghat-Agartala new line in the Budget, 96-97 and Harmuti-Itanagar in the Supplementary Budget, 96-97. Members will be happy to know that I am including the work of Diphu-Karong new railway line as the first phase of the BG line to Imphal the capital of Manipur in this Budget. Work on this line would be taken up once the necessary clearances have been obtained. I have also ordered the updating of the survey from Bhairabi to Sairang so that we can take up the new line to Sairang/Aizawl, to rail link the capital of Mizoram, in the coming years.

28. Requisite clearances have been received for Dausa-Gangapur City and Ahmednagar-Beed-Parli Vajinath new line projects which were already included in the Railway Budget. We would be starting the work on these projects in the coming financial year.

29. I have carefully considered the demands for new line projects, received from the Hon'ble members and in pursuance of our Government's policy to develop the rail infrastructure in backward areas, I have decided to take up construction of new lines from Lalitpur- Satna via Khajuraho and Rewa to Singrauli, from Baramati to Lonand and Kopargaon to Shirdi, from Tarantaran to Goindwal and Chandigarh to Ludhiana, Muzafarpur to Sitamari and Ara to Sasaram, from Giridih to Kodarma as the first phase of Giridih-Barkakhana-Ranchi line, Munirabad to Mehboobnagar, and Bangalore to Satyamangalam and from Dharmavaram to Penukonda via Puttaparthi and Angamali to Sabarimala as new works in the Budget, 97-98. These works would be taken up after the required clearances have been obtained.

30. There have been persistent demands for construction of new lines from Bishrampur to Ambikapur. These projects had been referred to the Planning Commission who did not agree for taking up these lines. However, based on representations from the Hon'ble members from these areas, the survey has been updated and after reviewing the results of survey, this will again be sent to the Planning Commission.

31. Necessary clearances are also being obtained for new lines from Talcher-Sukhinda Road, Bidar-Bulbarga and Gadwal to Raichur and once these become available, I will come to the august House for sanction to take up these works.

32. I am fully conscious of the need to develop the rail infrastructure in the Utrakhand Region. Accordingly, surveys for Saharanpur-Dehradun and Rishikesh-Karanprayag new lines have been taken up. Once the survey reports becomes available, I would obtain the necessary clearances and then come up for obtaining the approval of the House for taking up the work.

33. Coming to the progress of ongoing projects, I am happy to report that good progress is being made on Talcher-Sambalpur, Daitari-Banspani, Jammu-Udhampur and Guna-Etawah projects. All efforts will be made to complete Talcher-Sambalpur in 97-98. The other three projects would get completed by Dec'99.

34. The Government have provided Rs.20 crs. in the current year for the first phase work between Udhampur and Katra on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramula line and Rs.75 crs. have been provided in 97-98 for this line. We will make all out efforts to speed up work on this project.

Gauge Conversion

35. I am happy to report that Project Unigauge has been making excellent progress and Gauge conversion continues to be a priority area in the railways development plan. This year we have completed Wadsa-Nagbir, Arasikere-Hassan, Hossur-Salem, Mau-Shahganj and Mehsana-Marwar-Ajmer. By the end of March we hope to further open Hassan-Holenarsipur, Guntakal-Nandyal, Sagauli-Narkatiaganj, Castle Rock-Vasco, Dimapur to Dibrugarh and Tinsukhia to Lekhapani. We will also complete Bangarpet-Kolar. We will complete 6900 kms. in the 8th plan much in excess of the target of 6000 kms.

36. Work on the Gauge conversion projects on hand is making good progress and we hope to complete the following sections in 97-98:

- (i) Jodhpur-Marwar
- (ii) Hotgi-Bijapur
- (iii) Nagbir-Chandafort
- (iv) Mehboobnagar-Dronachellam
- (v) Mysore-Holenarsipur
- (vi) Chennai-Tirchy
- (vii) Narkatiaganj-Valmikinagar
- (viii) Mariani-Furkating loop
- (ix) Hajipur-Bachwara
- (x) Tirchy-Thanjavur
- (xi) Hassan-Sakleshpur
- (xii) Simalguri-Moranhat

These would make a total of over 1200 kms.

37. Work on some other projects is also making good progress and we hope to complete Katpadi-Tirupati and Gorakhpur-Chhitauni by the middle of the next financial year. We also intend to increase the scope of Mansi-Forbesganj gauge conversion project upto Katihar.

38. There have been persistent demand for taking up new Gauge conversion projects. Keeping in view the policy of this Government to take up infrastructure development in the backward areas on priority, as well as the need to develop alternative routes and links on the BG, we had included Gauge conversion of Jabalpur-Gondia including Balaghat-Katangi, Ajmer-Udaipur-Chhitaurgarh, Ranchi-Lohardanga and Surendernagar-Bhavnagar-Dhola-Dhasa-Mahuva with extension to Pipavav in the Supplementary Demands 96-97. I am happy to inform the House that the requisite clearances for starting the work have since been obtained in respect of the three projects i.e. Jabalpur-Gondia including Balaghat-Katangi, Ranchi-Lohardanga and Ajmer-Udaipur-Chhitaurgarh. We have also decided to include certain new Gauge conversion projects in the budget 97-98. These include Gauge conversion of Mudkhed-Secunderabad, Jaynagar-Darbhanga-Narkatiaganj and Samastipur-Khagaria, Rewari-Sadulpur, Mysore-Chamarajanagar with extension to Mettupalayam, Quilon-Tirunelveli-Trichandur and Tenkasi-Virudnagar, Naupada-Gunupur and Villupuram-Pondicherry to provide a BG link to the State capital of Pondicherry, Sriganganagar to Sarupsar, Luni-Barmer-Munabao and as the first phase of the conversion of the canal loop, Kanpur-Kasganj-Mathura and Kasganj-Bareilly and New Jalpaiguri-Silliguri-Bongaigaon. Of these the requisite clearances have been obtained for Kanpur-Kasganj-Mathura and Kasganj-Bareilly Gauge conversion project and work on this would be taken up after the budget is passed. For the remaining projects, necessary action for obtaining the updated project reports and clearances has already been initiated and we would start the work once these formalities are completed.

39. Gauge conversion of Bikaner-Hissar is under active consideration. Once the survey report becomes available I would obtain the necessary clearances and then come up for obtaining the approval of the House for taking up this work.

Doubling

40. Hon'ble members will be happy to know that doubling of Kengeri-Ramnagaram, Renigunta-Gudur, Patna-Gaya, Yeshwantpur-Tumkur to strengthen the rail network around Bangalore, Gorakhpur-Sajanva have been included in the budget.

41. Doubling of Champa-Sarabgundia, Rahama-Paradeep, Bilaspur-Urkura 3rd line, Sarona-Bhilai 3rd line, Titlagarh-Lanjigarh and Goelkera-Manoharpur 3rd line have also been included in the budget. Doubling of these lines would ease the traffic flows and create additional carrying capacity on some of the most saturated sections of the railways.

42. The requisite clearance has also been obtained for doubling of Hospet-Guntakal section and

work would be started on this project shortly.

Construction of a Workshop

43. At present, there is no ROH Depot for air brake wagons on N.E. Railway. Therefore, to meet the growing demand of maintenance, a work for creation of facilities for ROH of 250 air brake wagons per month is proposed at Barauni at a cost of Rs.25 cr.

Surveys

44. Considering the requests received from the Hon'ble members and from the State Governments, I have decided to take up the following new surveys for new lines in the Budget 97-98:

- a. Cuddapah to Nellore via Badvel and Atmakur and Butchireddipalem
- b. Nalgonda to Macherla via Nagarajunsagar
- c. Kurnool to Kamalapuram
- d. Nadikudi and Srikalahasti via Karampudi, Venukonda, Kanigiri
- e. Bhadrachallam Road and Vishakapatnam
- f. Kakinada to Pithapuram
- g. Pattancheru to Adilabad
- h. Kachiguda to Chityal
- i. Fatua-Islampur-Rajgir-Manpur-Gaya
- j. Rewari to Rohtak
- k. Bijapur-Athani-Shedbal
- l. Bangalore city-Mudigere-Shringeri
- m. Belgaum-Dharwad via Bailhongal and Kitur
- n. Medikere-Channarayana-Patna via Holenarsipur, Arakalgud, Mercera
- o. Kushalnagar-Channarayapatna via Kunanur
- p. Davangere to Bhadravati via Chineri
- q. Gadag-Wadi
- r. Bidar-Gulbarga-Hospet
- s. New Moinaguri-Mathabanga-New Coochbehar to Jogighopa via Boxirhat
- t. Updating survey for new line from Bhairabi-Sairang / Aizwal
- u. Sivok to Gangtok
- v. Barpeta Road to Tihu
- w. Hoshiarpur to Una BG
- x. Nokha-Sikar via Bedasar and Sujangarh
- y. Churu to Taranagar
- z. Kolayat-Pokaran-Barmer
- aa. Tindivanum to Pondicherry
- bb. Chola to Bulandshahar
- cc. Budge Budge to Falta
- dd. Budge Budge-Namkhana- Frazerganj
- ee. Kursela - Rupoli - Saharsa
- ff. Koparia/Samri-Bhaktiyarpur-Alamnagar-Bihariganj
- gg. Khalilabad to Naugarh
- hh. Hassanpur-Barauni
- ii. Nanjangod-Badagara via Vyitri-Poozhithod
- jj. Supual to Araria via Triveniganj and Raniganj
- kk. Mainpuri-Etawah

45. Hon'ble members have demanded a survey for new line between Gola Gokran Nath and Farrukhabad via Mohammadi and Shahjahanpur. I would like to inform that this survey has already been sanctioned and survey work is already in progress.

46. Survey for the following lines are being taken up for gauge conversion: -

- a. Badarpur-Kumarghat, Katakhal-Bhairabi, Silchar-Jiribam, Baraigram-Dulabchera
- b. Gonda-Bahraich-Mailani
- c. Katpadi-Villupuram
- d. Kaptanganj-Siwan, Thawe-Chhapra
- e. Bareilly-Lalkuan

47. Survey for doubling of following lines will also be taken up :-

- a. Shahdara-Shamli
- b. Jharsuguda-Titlagarh

c. Dehri-on-Sone to Jadunathpur via Banjari

48. I would like to inform the Hon'ble members that those surveys which were undertaken in the past i.e. new line surveys for Nirmali-Bhapatiyai, Sirsa-Fatehabad-Agroha-Hissar, Patiala-Samana-Nirwana, Abhojar-Fazilka, Galgalia-Araria, Panipat-Meerut, Jammu-Rajouri-Pooch, Quilon-Kotarakara-Trivandrum, Saradarsahar-Hanumangarh, Dungarpur-Ratlam-Barasta-Banswada, and for gauge conversion of Rewari-Phulera-Loharu-Jhunjunu-Sikar, Gonda-Gorakhpur Loop, Selam-Cuddalore, Ratangarh-Degana, Ratlam-Akola-Khandawa are in progress and I have instructed for early completion of these surveys. After the completion of surveys, further action would be considered.

49. Optimization and rationalization of maintenance facilities and preparation of master plan for integrated development of rail infrastructure in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Calcutta and Patna areas.

Konkan Railway Corporation

50. Hon'ble members will be happy to know that the work on the Konkan Railway Project has been completed to the extent of 98%. Out of the 760 kms. long line, Roha to Sawantwadi (364 kms.) and Mangalore to Kundapura (100 kms.) has already been commissioned. On the remaining length, all the earthwork and bridges have been completed. Due to unforeseen geological problems, two tunnels in Goa sector spanning 500 metres have still to be made through and foreign consultancy is being obtained to solve this problem.

51. I have personally inspected the tunnels. We are making all out efforts and we hope to complete the line by June, 1997. It is hoped that through train services will be started from one end to the other by June, 1997. Meanwhile, trains are already being run on lines falling in Maharashtra and will shortly be started in Karnataka.

Metropolitan Transport Projects

52. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to inform the House that Calcutta Metro Railway is already in operation. About two lakh passengers use this system everyday. At present, only some residual works are in progress. These are likely to be completed by the end of March, 1997.

53. Techno-economic studies for extension of Metro from Tollyganj to New Garia has since been completed. Another techno-economic study for extension from Dum Dum to Barrackpore is in progress.

54. As the Hon'ble members are aware, the Circular Railway is in operation from Dum Dum to Princepghat. Keeping in view the problems of the commuters in Calcutta area, I propose to take up the survey for extension of the Circular Railway from Princepghat to Majerhat.

55. In addition, the commuters face considerable problems in switching from Metro to the suburban system at Dum Dum station. The Budget provides for traffic facilities at Tala station including electrification of the section from Tala to Dum Dum so that in the peak hours, commuter services can be started from Tala for the northern suburbs.

56. In order to improve the suburban services in the northern parts of Calcutta and to alleviate the problems of commuters of Krishnanagar industrial area, I am including in the Budget, a scheme for electrification of Ranaghat-Gede and Ranaghat-Bongaon sections.

57. The first phase of MRTS/Chennai Project is nearing completion. The remaining section from Chepauk to Luz will be opened by March, 1997. The work of extension of MRTS from Luz to Vellachery is also in progress. This is being constructed in coordination with the Tamil Nadu State Government and a budget provision of Rs.50 cr. has been proposed during 1997-98.

58. Mr. Speaker, the House is aware that various measures are being taken to improve the suburban services in Mumbai area. Some new projects have also been identified for being taken up to improve the services. Rail India Techno Economic Services has been commissioned to undertake detailed studies for laying of fifth and sixth lines from Mumbai Central to Borivali on Western Railway and fifth and sixth line from Mumbai CST to Kurla on Central Railway. Some more works have also been identified for inclusion in the Mumbai Urban Transport Project-II. Studies are in progress in four different areas to find solution to the problems being faced by suburban passengers.

59. Development of transport facilities in New Mumbai area have also been given priority to decongest the main island city. In this direction, construction of a new electrified track is under execution in

collaboration with the State Government of Maharashtra.

60. Extension of fifth line from Santa Cruz to Borivli and construction of fifth and sixth line from Kurla to Bhandup (Phase-I of Kurla-Thane) are in progress.

61. The existing 1500 volt DC system in Mumbai area has reached its operational limits and this is causing a serious constraint in handling any additional traffic. Accordingly, the existing 1500 volt DC traction system is being converted into 25 kv AC single phase 50 Hz system on both Central and Western Railways.

62. Despite all financial constraints, Rs.170 cr. have been provided during 1997-98 for Metropolitan Transport Projects.

Electrification

63. Mr. Speaker, effort is on to complete the target of electrification of 634 route kms in 1996-97. With this, Railways will have a total of 13509 route kms of track fully electrified. With this, VIII Plan target of 2700 kms. would also be met. It is proposed to electrify the dense corridors, some of the missing links and the high density route on East Coast Line. An outlay of Rs. 350 cr. has been provided for this purpose in the Budget for 1997-98.

Track Renewal

64. A target of 9600 km was kept for VIII Five Year Plan. For 1996-97, the target was kept at 2564 km which would be achieved. With this VIII Five Year Plan target will also be achieved. Arrears of track renewal have been cleared to a large extent, however, still 9000 km are left. An all time high provision of Rs.1250 cr. has been provided during 1997-98.

Railway Production Units

65. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to inform this House that all the Railway Production Units i.e. Diesel Locomotive Works, Varanasi, Chittaranjan Locomotive Works, Chittaranjan, Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, Wheel & Axle Plant, Bangalore, Diesel Component Works, Patiala have achieved their production targets. Only Rail Coach Factory, Kapurthala could not achieve its target due to adverse industrial relations. Due to strike during 1996-97 also the production of RCF has been adversely affected. However, the problems have been sorted out and it is hoped that this Production Unit will be able to achieve its production capacity in future.

Public Sector Undertakings

66. The performance of all the Public Sector Undertakings under the Ministry of Railways was commendable during 1995-96.

IRCON International

67. In 1995-96 IRCON had a turn over of Rs.626 cr. and earned foreign exchange worth Rs.189 cr. As compared to 1994-95 this was a highly commendable performance.

68. IRCON earned a profit of Rs.163 cr. before tax and paid a dividend of Rs.1.98 cr. It completed various projects in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Nepal and Indonesia and also secured new contracts from Bangladesh, Nepal, Botswana, Tanzania, Angola and Malaysia.

Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES)

69. RITES had a turn over of Rs.109.9 cr. in 1995-96 and earned foreign exchange worth Rs.42.5 cr. It secured new business from Tunisia, Botswana, Kampuchia, Ghana, Mozambique, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia. RITES paid a dividend of Rs.60 lakhs.

Container Corporation of India (CONCOR)

70. During 1995-96, two new terminals have been commissioned, a Port Side Container Terminal (PSCT) at Milavittan (Tuticorin) and an Inland Container Depot (ICD). Two ICDs at Gwalior and Nagpur are also ready for commissioning. The Corporation's total turn over increased from Rs.217 cr. in 1994-95 to Rs.389 cr. in 1995-96. In the coming year CONCOR proposes to construct new ICDs at Aurangabad, Balasore and a major new terminal at Dadri in Greater NOIDA near Delhi.

Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC)

71. IRFC was to raise Rs. 1850 cr. from domestic as well as foreign markets during 1996-97. It has already made available approximately Rs. 1500 cr. to end of January, 1997. The Corporation made a profit of Rs. 205.76 cr. in 1995-96 and has paid a dividend of 20% on the paid up share capital amounting to Rs. 46.40 cr.

72. During 1997-98, IRFC has been given a target of Rs.2150 cr. to be raised from the domestic and foreign market.

Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO)

73. RDSO in Lucknow occupies a special place for Indian Railways in the field of development of design and research. It functions as consultant to the Indian Railways in technical matters.

Sports

74. Railways' performance in sports has been very impressive in 1995-96. Railways emerged as a national title holder in as many as 16 different championships. The trend continues in the current year as well. Upto January, 1997, Railways have already won 13 championships. Railways have impressive representation in international participation. Two railway sports persons were amongst the proud recipient of Arjuna Award during the year.

75. The House will be happy to know that for further improve the level of sports on the Railways I organised a meeting with the eminent sports persons working on the railways who had been participants of International/National sports events with a view to elicit their suggestions. Based on these suggestions, incentives to sports persons achieving excellence are being improved in addition to taking various other measures.

Medicare

76. Railway doctors and para medical staff are providing satisfactory medical facilities to the railway employees. Perumbur hospital of Indian Railways occupies a special place in Open Heart Surgery and it is now linked to the National Library of Medicine in U.S.A. for regular updating of knowledge on the subject.

Railway Protection Force (RPF)

77. The responsibility for security of railway passengers and their belongings is on the State Government Police and this issue is being discussed with the State Governments to make security in trains more effective. RPF is performing very well in protecting the railway property and the statistics indicate that cases of theft of railway property have reduced.

78. A special recruitment drive has been launched in Northeast Frontier Region, Uttrakhand and Jammu & Kashmir for filling up the vacancies. This will ensure adequate representation of SC, ST and other backward classes in the Force. In addition, 750 women constables are also being recruited. This recruitment process will be completed in about two months.

Labour Participation in Management

79. We are continuing to have cordial industrial relations. In the matter of Labour Participation in Management, I am glad to inform the House that leaders of recognised Labour Federations participated in the General Managers' and Chief Personnel Officers' Conference. Apart from the above, formal meetings under the Joint Consultative Machinery (JCM) and Permanent Negotiating Machinery (PNM) Schemes have been held regularly at the Railway Board's level. The affiliated Union leaders participate in the Principal Officers Meetings at the Zonal Railway level and in the Divisional Officers Meetings at the Divisional level.

Special Recruitment Drive to Clear the Backlog of SCs/STs

80. As already announced last year in my Budget Speech, Railways have more than 25% of the employees belonging to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and our performance in achieving the prescribed percentage of reservation is one of the best. However, in line with the directives of the Government, a special drive was launched from July 1996 to clear the backlog of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in recruitment categories. I am happy to report that about 1700 SC/ST candidates have been recruited since then and the drive is still on.

Abolition of Contractual System in Cleanliness

81. According to the announcement made during the last session, the contractual system of cleanliness in railways has been abolished. This activity will now be done by railways themselves and recruitment of personnel has already started for the purpose.

Regularisation of Casual Labour

82. Measures to improve the lot of casual labour of the Railways were announced in the last Budget Speech. I am happy to report that over 16000 casual labour have been regularised since then and the number is likely to reach the figure of 30,000 by the end of March 1997. It is proposed to regularise all the 56,000 casual labour by the end of the next financial year i.e. 31st March 1998.

Productivity Linked Bonus (PLB)

83. Indian Railways had taken initiative in introducing the concept of Productivity Linked Bonus in Government. This matter is always discussed with the organised labour unions. PLB equivalent to 52 days wages was paid to Group 'C' & 'D' railway employees without any eligibility wage ceiling for the year 1995-96. It is hoped that railway employees will continue to contribute in increasing the productivity in Railways.

Inventory Control

84. Due to sustained attention on material management and inventory control, inventory turn over ratio has come down and during 1995-96, this was 14% which is a record and a substantial improvement over 33% of 1990-91. Special efforts for sale of scrap continued and during 1995-96, an all time high sale of Rs.1018 cr. was achieved. We have also decided that minimum inventory is maintained in the depots and they should be issued to the user departments.

85. Indian Railways procure material worth Rs.7000 cr. approximately every year ranging from railway locomotives to cloth for dresses of the staff. It is natural that such enormous purchases affect the national industries, especially the small scale industries. I have taken following decisions for ensuring transparency, increasing competition and improving the quality of the purchases :-

- (i) Details of all major purchases by the Railways will be published regularly.
- (ii) All Zonal Railways will arrange for a permanent distribution in their areas for displaying items of purchase being procured and likely to be purchased in future. Necessary information, e.g., previous procurement price, sources of purchase and specifications will also be made available. At the Central level, Railway Board will also organise a permanent exhibition in Delhi area.
- (iii) An Investigation Cell will be set up in Railway Board and also at each Zonal Railway for maintaining information on correct procurement price, assessment of quality and sources of supply of materials purchased by Indian Railways.

Computerisation

86. Computerisation on railways has been very successful and it is being further extended. One can not even imagine the state of reservations without the present computerised PRS. Computerised Self Printing Ticketing Machines are also being provided. Computerised season tickets are now also being issued from any station of Central and Western Railways to any other station of these Railways in the Mumbai suburban area. The Zonal Headquarters computers have been replaced. In addition, the use of computers in Divisions, Workshops, Store Depots, Training Institutes and RDSO have been increased rapidly. Introduction of railways much talked Operation Information System is also being expedited.

Setting up of New Zones

87. During my previous Budget Speech I had announced setting up of six new Zonal Headquarters. I am happy to inform the august House that all these six Zonal Headquarters have been inaugurated and General Managers as Officers on Special Duty have been posted. The work of setting up of headquarters and other offices has also been started.

Railway Passenger Services

88. For introduction of new train services, rolling stock, new lines and gauge conversion all need to be increased as these three are complementary to each other. Efforts in this direction are continuing. Hon'ble members have suggested a large number of demands. Although it is not possible to fulfill all these demands, despite resource constraints, following new services were introduced during the last year: -

89. Soon after the formation of the Government, I introduced Amritsar-Jammu Tawi Express and Jaipur-Ajmer Link Express, thus, fulfilling the long standing demand of the people.

90. During 1996-97 (upto Jan.'97), 82 new trains were introduced. In addition, frequency of 22 trains was increased and 62 trains were extended. This also includes trains which were in addition to the trains

announced in my Budget Speech. The main among them are as under:

- (i) Jodhpur-Jaisalmer Express.
- (ii) Kurla-Ratnagiri-Sawantwadi Express.
- (iii) Patna-Darbhanga Intercity.
- (iv) Singrauli-Garwa Road Link Express to Patna.

91. In order to clear extra rush of traffic during summer vacations and marriage season, Railways ran as many as 1214 special trains on 30 routes. This year also we propose to run special trains at the same level.

92. In addition to the above, to meet the demands of Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians and various religious groups, pilgrim specials were run through out the country.

93. Members may recall that I had mentioned on the Floor of the House regarding the introduction of Dikshabhoomi Express connecting Gaya with Nagpur. As you all know Bodh Gaya is the hallowed place where Mahatma Buddha received enlightenment and Nagpur is the city where Baba Saheb Ambedkar embraced Buddhism. I have asked the Railways to develop terminal facilities at Gaya and once these are developed, this train will be introduced during 1997-98.

New Train Services

94. 1997-98 is the Golden Jubilee year of Indian independence. On this occasion, I have decided to introduce following Golden Jubilee trains :-

- (i) Ahmedabad-Delhi Rajdhani Express (Weekly)
- (ii) Secunderabad-Nizamuddin Rajdhani Express (Weekly)
- (iii) Bangalore-Nizamuddin Express via Hubly (Weekly)
- (iv) Ranchi-Delhi Express (Bi-weekly)
- (v) Visakhapatnam-Nizamuddin Express via Vijayawada (Bi-weekly)

95. Following more new trains will also be run :

- (i) Madras-Tirupati Intercity
- (ii) Vasco-Bangalore Express
- (iii) Surat-Patna Express (Weekly)
- (iv) Gorakhpur-Dehradun Express (Bi-weekly)
- (v) Koraput-Rayagada Link Express to Bhubaneswar
- (vi) Katihar-Barauni Link Express to Tatanagar.

96. There have been pressing demands for a fast day-time service between Bangalore and Coimbatore. In deference to the wishes of the people, I propose to introduce a super fast intercity service between these two important cities of south India.

97. Frequency of the following trains will be increased :-

- (i) 9767/9768 Jaipur-Chennai Express from 1 to 3.
- (ii) 7611/7612 Nanded-Amritsar Express from 1 to 3.
- (iii) 4245/4246 Surat-Varanasi from 4 to 5.
- (iv) 3301/3302 Dhanbad-Tatanagar Suvarnrekha Express (Daily)

98. The run of the following trains will be extended :-

- (i) 4609/4610 Jammu Tawi-Ferozepur Express to Jodhpur (via Bhatinda/Bikaner).
- (ii) 3307/3308 Dhanbad-Ludhiana Express to Ferozepur.
- (iii) 6315/6316 Cochin-Howrah weekly Express to Trivandrum.
- (iv) 3327/3328 Howrah-Singrauli Shaktipunj Express to Jabalpur.
- (v) 4047/4048 Delhi-Gonda Express to Gorakhpur.
- (vi) 5217/5218 Kurla-Muzaffarpur Express to Darbhanga on one more day.
- (vii) 6311/6312 Bangalore-Howrah Weekly Express to Guwahati.
- (viii) 7663/7664 Kacheguda-Aurangabad Express to Manmad.
- (ix) 8005/8006 Howrah-Rayagada Express to Koraput.
- (x) 5323/5324 Gorakhpur-Darbhanga Express to Jainagar.

99. There has been a demand for extension of Hyderabad-Cochin Express (7029/7030) upto Kanniyakumari. It has not been possible to implement this on account of line capacity constraints on

Ernakulam-Trivandrum section and lack of terminal capacity both at Nagercoil and Trivandrum. Once the above facilities are developed, this train will be extended to Kanniyakumari.

100. There has been a demand for an additional service between Visakhapatnam-Madras. To fulfill this, it is proposed to augment 6003/6004 Madras-Howrah Mail and 2841/2842 Madras-Howrah Coromandal Express by three coaches each with electrification getting completed upto Visakhapatnam.

Rajdhani Services

101. There have been pressing demands for the increase in frequency of existing Rajdhani services. During the last Budget Session, I had announced increase in frequency of Nizamuddin-Bangalore Rajdhani and New Delhi-Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Express and had also asked for the manufacture of coaches for the introduction of the services. Now that the coaches are available, I propose to introduce these within the current financial year.

- (i) You will also be happy to know that I propose to increase the frequency of Nizamuddin-Madras Rajdhani Express from weekly to bi-weekly.
- (ii) I have promise to extend Guwahati Rajdhani Express upto Dimapur. Now that gauge conversion work upto Dibrugarh is progressing very well and terminal facilities are being developed, I propose to extend Guwahati Rajdhani Express upto Dibrugarh via Dimapur as a weekly service.
- (iii) You will also be happy to know that with the commissioning of the Konkan Railway, the existing Nizamuddin-Trivandrum Rajdhani Express will get diverted via the Konkan Railway thus providing an exclusive Rajdhani Express for Goa and Kerala.

102. With the commissioning of the Konkan Railway the distance between the North and the West to Goa, Mangalore and Kerala will get reduced. Honble Members of Parliament from Kerala have been asking for additional service to Delhi. I, therefore, propose to divert the Mangala Express via Konkan Railway and extend it to Ernakulam so as to provide a new service from Ernakulam to Delhi. With this change in route the travelling time from Delhi to Mangalore will reduce by more than 12 hours.

103. I propose to divert Kurla-Mangalore/Cochin Netravati Express via Konkan Railway which will reduce the running time for Mangalore by more than 20 hours and for Cochin by approximately 10 hours.

104. EMU, DMU and Rail Buses were started some time back and these have been greatly appreciated by the public. Following new services will be introduced during the next year :-

105. Main Line EMU services will be started on the following sections:-

- (i) Purulia-Asansol-Bardhaman
- (ii) Asansol-Chittaranjan-Jhajha
- (iii) Dhanbad-Gomoh-Gaya
- (iv) Gaya-Dehri-on-Sone-Mughalsarai
- (v) Kanpur-Agra

106. DMU services will be started on the following sections :-

- (i) Amritsar-Derababa Nanak
- (ii) Amritsar-Atari
- (iii) Satna-Maihar
- (iv) Nidadavolu-Bhimavaram-Narsapur

107. Rail Bus services are proposed to be introduced on the following sections :-

Broad Gauge

- (i) Jalamb-Khamgaon
- (ii) Etah-Barhan
- (iii) Tinpahar-Raj Mahal

Metre Gauge

- (i) Kalol-Vijapur-Ambliyan
- (ii) Garhi Harsaru-Farukhnagar

108. It has been decided to provide NG Rail Bus on the following sections after their restoration :

- (i) Dankura-Damodar

- (ii) Bodeli-Chhota Udepur
- (iii) Maharajganj-Duraundha
- (iv) Ankleshwar-Raj Pipla

Punctuality

108. Indian Railways are making all efforts for improvement in punctuality including intensive chasing, round the clock monitoring, periodic punctuality drive, etc. These efforts have resulted in notable improvement in punctuality. I would like to assure the august House that the Railways will continue to make efforts in this direction.

Special Announcements

109. In order to further improve the lot of the licensed porters, we have decided to provide one set of winter uniform every second year in lieu one shirt of summer uniform, for those licensed porters working in cold regions. This is in addition to other facilities, such as concessional travel and medical facilities extended to them earlier.

110. Even though the porters (coolies) working on the railway stations are not railway servants, but presently they are being allowed 75% travel concession by sleeper class for self only once a year. I propose to make this travel free for them once a year.

111. I am happy to announce that the Press Correspondents accredited to the Headquarters of Government of India and to the State Governments/Union Territories for travel on business connected with bona-fide press work, will now be able to travel in upper classes also within their monetary entitlements already given under the existing concessions.

112. At present medical facilities available to the retired railway employees are not at par with the serving employees, the retired employees being in slightly disadvantageous position. In line with our policy to look after the senior citizens, I propose to bring the medical facilities available to the retired railway employees at par with the serving employees.

113. The scheme of complimentary passes to winners of Gallantry Awards has been extended to winners of President's Police Medals for Gallantry and President's Police Medal also.

114. Recently, a function was organised under the auspicious of International Children's Excellence Fund to honour the children who have made significant contributions in their own fields. I had made an announcement at the function that all awarded children alongwith one of their parent will be allowed a free one time travel pass by sleeper class to be availed during the period of one year.

115. The present Dress Regulations are continuing since long and were last revised in the year 1980. To commemorate the 50th year of Indian Independence, dress changes will be introduced for certain categories of railway staff with effect from 15th August, 1997.

116. Refund of tickets will be made by the Station Managers / Superintendents at 453 stations where tickets have been issued.

117. The facility of credit card has now been made available at 30 stations and also made broad-based.

Budget Estimates 1997-98

118. On the basis of the traffic projections of 430 million tonnes and passenger growth of 3% over 96-97, the Gross Traffic Receipts at the current fare and freight rates are estimated at Rs.26,055 cr. There is an increase of Rs. 1605 cr. over the Revised Estimates of the current year. This additional revenue is expected on account of additional traffic output expected during 1997-98.

119. The Ordinary Working Expenses in 1997-98 are estimated at Rs. 20935 cr. There is an increase of Rs. 4785 cr. over the Revised Estimates for the current year. This increase will take care of the cost of inputs for the incremental traffic, expected increase in prices, additional payment of dearness allowance, higher payment of lease charges to Indian Railway Finance Corporation and the impact on account of recommendations of Fifth Pay Commission.

120. The appropriation to Depreciation Reserve Fund is proposed at Rs.2000 cr. in 1997-98 as against Rs.2115 cr. provided in the Revised Estimates of 1996-97.

121. The contribution from revenue to Pension Fund is proposed to be kept at Rs.2200 cr. and Rs.300 cr. are proposed to be drawn from the balance of Pension Fund. Thus Rs.2500 cr. have been provided for withdrawal from Pension Fund during 1997-98.

122. A memorandum on the rate of dividend payable to General Revenues has been submitted to the Railway Convention Committee. The dividend for 1997-98 has been provided at the same rate as adopted for 1996-97 subject to suitable adjustments on receipt of recommendations of Railway Convention Committee. On this basis, the dividend liability for 1997-98 works out to Rs. 1630 cr.

123. The Total Working Expenses comprising Ordinary Working Expenses, Contribution to Depreciation Reserve Fund and Pension Fund works out to Rs. 25135 cr. and the Gross Traffic Receipts are estimated at Rs. 26055 cr. Thus, the Net Traffic Receipts work out to Rs. 920 cr. Adding the Net Miscellaneous Receipts of Rs. 284 cr., the Net Railway Revenue is estimated at Rs. 1204 cr. This revenue is not adequate to fully discharge the dividend liability of Rs. 1630 cr. and to finance the works chargeable to Development Fund and Capital Fund. There is a marginal shortfall of Rs. 426 cr. We have to cover this deficit and also to provide funds for works chargeable to Development Fund and Capital Fund.

Need for Additional Resources

124. Sir, the railway finances have come under great strain this year as provision of funds have been made to meet the liability on account of Fifth Pay Commission recommendations, increased cost of inputs and the requirement of funds to undertake various projects for the development of rail network in North East region, backward/neglected areas inhabited by the tribals. The internal resources available on the basis of existing fare and freight rates are Rs. 1619 cr. Borrowings through Indian Railway Finance Corporation have been estimated at Rs.2150 cr. and an investment of Rs.900 cr. under BOLT/OYW schemes is expected. Taking into account the budgetary support of Rs.1831 cr. from General Revenues, the total resources becoming available for executing the annual plan of Rs.8300 cr. are Rs. 6500 cr. only. Thus there is a gap of Rs. 1800 cr. There is an option before me to further reduce the Railways' Annual Plan. But this would affect not only the Railways' network development but also the economy as a whole. ng to Rs. 1800 cr., through very modest and selective adjustments in fares and freight rates. I shall now refer to these proposals.

125. Mr. Speaker, as this august House is aware, majority of the passengers using rail transport are from the lower strata of the society. They travel predominantly in the Second Class Ordinary and Second Class Mail/Express trains. In the major metropolitan towns like Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai, the season ticket holders are also mainly from the lower strata of the society. Out of a total of more than 4 billion passengers using the rail transport, 93 percent travel in the Second Class and in the suburban rail services. Hon'ble members would recall that while presenting the Budget last year, I had not increased the fares for the Second Class ordinary, Second Class Mail/Express, Second Class and First Class Season Tickets as also the Sleeper Class (Mail/Express) upto 200 kms. I again propose not to increase the fares of Second Class Ordinary, Second Class Mail/Express and monthly and quarterly season tickets for Second and First Class for all distances for the year 1997-98 as well. I am also not increasing the charges for platform tickets.

126. I never wanted to put any financial burden on the common man. But on the one side, Railway finances have come under great strain and on the other the need of higher resources for the development of rail network and infrastructure is compelling me to appeal to you to share a little financial burden. In view of the need for additional resources, as already mentioned, I with great reluctance, propose to effect a modest increase of 5 percent in fares of Sleeper Class (Mail/Express and ordinary) for all distances.

127. The fares for Air-conditioned First Class, Air-conditioned 2-Tier Sleeper, Air-conditioned 3-Tier Sleeper, Air-conditioned Chair Car and First Class (Mail/Express and Ordinary) are proposed to be increased by 10 percent. The fares of all Shatabdi Expresses and Rajdhani Expresses including August Kranti Express are also proposed to be revised suitably. There has been a demand to provide catering in all Rajdhani Expresses. It is, therefore, proposed to provide this facility in Hazrat Nizamuddin-Trivandrum, Hazrat Nizamuddin-Bangalore and Hazrat Nizamuddin-Jammu Tawi Rajdhani Expresses also in all classes and levy fares inclusive of catering charges w.e.f. 1.4.1997, as in other Rajdhani Expresses.

128. I do not propose any increase in the existing Parcel and Luggage rates. However, keeping in view the superior quality of service rendered, I propose to levy a surcharge of 20 percent on parcels and luggage carried by superfast trains. I also do not propose any increase in the existing Newspaper and Magazine rates.

129. The proposals in regard to freight rates are as under.

130. The existing freight rates of all commodities shall be enhanced by 12 percent at all distances. But this increase will not be applicable on commodities of consumption by masses, as I do not wish to put any extra burden on the common man. I have, therefore, decided to exempt the following commodities from this increase:-

- (i) Foodgrains and Pulses,
- (ii) Edible Salt,
- (iii) Edible Oils,
- (iv) Urea as Chemical Fertilizer,
- (v) Kerosene,
- (vi) Sugar,
- (vii) Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG),
- (viii) Fruits fresh (including Bananas) and vegetables,
- (ix) Fodder (other than Oil Cakes),
- (x) Livestock,
- (xi) Oilseeds,
- (xii) Organic Manures,
- (xiii) Gur, Shakkar and Jaggery,
- (xiv) Hydrogenated Oils, and
- (xv) Vegetable Oils (refined)

131. The changes proposed in fares and freight rates shall come into force from 1.4.1997.

132. These charges are expected to yield an additional revenue of about Rs.1800 crores during the financial year, 1997-98. I would like to assure the august House that the resources so generated will be effectively used to develop rail network and infrastructure and to strengthen it.

133. Sir, the august House is aware that this government is committed to take the rail network to northeast region and other backward/neglected areas. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Sh. H.D.Deve Gowda ji has been a great source of support and encouragement in all our developmental efforts. I wish to express my gratitude for all the support and guidance given to us by him. I also wish to place on record our appreciation of the dedication and devotion with which the railwaymen have carried out their assigned tasks.

134. With these words, Sir, I commend the Railway Budget for 1997-98 to the House.
