

judge of High Court to probe into the cause of accident and to suggest safeguards against similar accidents in future.

(b) Following steps have been taken to check recurrence of such type of accident:

1. Intensive inspection of track at various levels is undertaken to ensure round the clock safety.
2. For better and improved track maintenance, mechanised track maintenance is being progressively introduced in place of conventional manual maintenance.
3. For detection of hidden flaws in the rail not visible to the naked eye, Ultrasonic Flaw Detectors (USFD) are being used.
4. The rails are being tested regularly as per a predetermined frequency by the hand held USFD testers as well as by the SPURT (Self Propelled Ultrasonic Rail Testing) car.
5. Regular patrolling of the railway track by gangmen is carried out during vulnerable seasons such as summer, monsoon and the winter months.
6. Those found responsible for accidents are sternly taken up including senior officials. Stringent penalty to the extent of dismissal/removal from service is being imposed on staff causing serious accidents.
7. Railways is pursuing SAIL/Bhilai Steel Plant vigorously for installation and commissioning the upgrading facilities for improving the quality of rails.

[Translation]

#### **Construction of Airports at Jaisalmer and Bikaner**

430. SHRI SHANTI LAL CHAPLOT : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal is under consideration of the Union Government to construct civil airports at Jaisalmer and Bikaner (Rajasthan); and

(b) if so, the reasons for the delay in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. The airports at Jaisalmer and Bikaner in Rajasthan belong to Ministry of Defence and the Airports Authority of India maintains the civil enclaves at these airports.

[English]

#### **Passenger and Freight Traffic**

431. SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for falling Railways' share in passenger and freight traffic as compared to roadways; and

(b) the short-term and long-term steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) The share of Railways in passenger and freight traffic as compared to roadways has been falling over the years and has come down from about 89% share of the freight traffic in 1951 to about 40% share in 1995 and from 68% share of the passenger traffic in 1951 to about 20% share in 1995.

The main reasons for the declining share of Railways in freight as well as passenger traffic are as below:

(i) *Inadequate capacity*

One of the main reasons for the decline in Railways' share in freight and passenger traffic has been their inability to generate adequate capacity to meet the growth of traffic. The main reason for this is that Railways have been seriously under-funded in recent Plan periods and the budgetary support has been woefully short of their needs.

(ii) *Reduced budgetary support and plan outlay*

The budgetary support provided to the Railways has also been decreasing over the years and has come down to about 25% of the total plan outlay for the IX five-year plan as compared to 75% of the total plan outlay for the