

LOK SABHA DEBATES

(English Version)

Fourth Session
(Fourteenth Lok Sabha)



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LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

11.02 hrs.

Thursday, May 5, 2005/Vaisakha 15, 1927 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

(MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*)

REFERENCE BY THE SPEAKER

Successful Launch of PSL Vehicle Carrying Two Satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, I take great pride to inform the House that the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C6 carrying the two Satellites, namely, CARTOSAT-I and HAMSAT, have been successfully launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh at 1020 hours this morning. This is the first time that two satellites have been launched simultaneously. It is also for the first time that a satellite as heavy as CARTOSAT-I, which weighs approximately 1,500 kilograms, has been launched by India.

HAMSAT is a small satellite in comparison, and weighs only 42.5 kilograms. The PSLV has been launched from the new launching pad, which was dedicated to the nation yesterday by the hon. President, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam.

CARTOSAT-I is 11th in the series of Remote Sensing Satellites launched by India, and it is primarily meant to map the country.

The HAMSAT, on the other hand, is the gift of ISRO to the community of amateur radio-operators. It has got two transponders, which will help the Ham radio-operators in communicating about floods, earthquakes, etc., quickly, and at low cost.

The launching of the two satellites has once again demonstrated the strength of Indian science made possible by the ceaseless efforts of our dedicated scientists in yet another frontier area of space technology.

I am sure the House will join me in complementing our scientists on these achievements.

OBSERVATION BY THE SPEAKER

Participation of Opposition Parties in Lok Sabha Proceedings

[English]

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU (Srikakulam): Sir, I would like to say something.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Yerrannaaidu, I will call you after this observation.

Hon. Members, at the outset, let me welcome the hon. Members belonging to the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), who have decided to attend the proceedings of the House.

As the Speaker of the House of People, I cannot, but express my deep sense of disappointment at the decision taken by the Opposition Parties to continue to remain absent from the House. Since the decision of boycott by the Opposition Parties, I have been, almost every day, requesting them to come and participate in the proceedings. On my behalf, I have assured them that I shall allow all the issues, which are permitted by the Rules, to be discussed on the floor of the House.

Lok Sabha is the House of the People. It does not belong either to the Government or to any particular Section of the House. The Speaker's duty is to see that the House performs in accordance with the Rules and Procedures of Business, so that the objectives for which the Lok Sabha has been constituted are fulfilled.

I feel it will be an unwarranted exercise of power of the Speaker if he meddles into the political affairs or the political formulations of any Party or Group of Parties, and seeks to intervene. It has been suggested by my friends in the Opposition that I should have written to the hon. Prime Minister on the issue of what is called 'the grievances of the Opposition against the Government and the Treasury Benches'. According to me, it would have been an intrusion by the Speaker into an arena, which should be left to the political parties to decide and resolve.

Apart from the daily requests, both verbally through the media and also by letters addressed to the hon. Chairperson of the NDA as also to the hon. Leader of Opposition, I have been inviting the hon. Leaders of all the political parties —including those Parties boycotting the proceedings— every morning for a meeting before the start of the proceedings of the day to come back; but, unfortunately, without the desired result.

I once again request all my friends in the House to take part in the proceedings in a manner for which there are ample Rules and Procedures available to us.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my party had been boycotting the Parliamentary proceedings. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Athawale, please do not do it. This is not proper. This is a very solemn matter, and a very important issue.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my party had been boycotting the Parliamentary proceedings since 27 April till yesterday.

However, on Monday, I have participated in the debate on the Finance Bill, 2005. What is deplorable is their hostile and vindictive attitude. In a healthy democracy, the role of the Opposition is most important. Without the Opposition, there is no parliamentary democracy. The UPA Government should treat the Opposition like friends and not as enemies because then only parliamentary democracy will survive.

My Party has decided to raise some important issues on the floor of the House. While condemning the hostile and vindictive attitude of the Government, we would like to participate in the parliamentary proceedings. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Member, please sit down. You should give up this attitude of interrupting others.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: I am expressing my views. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing will be recorded except Shri Kinjarapu Yerrannaidu's statement.

*(Interruptions)...**

DR. M. JAGANNATH (Nagar Kurnool): He should be given the freedom to express his views. Why are they interrupting him?

MR. SPEAKER: I am giving that freedom; you have that freedom. If anybody interferes with that, I am there to control. I want to make it clear that the habit of interrupting each other will not be tolerated.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: While condemning the attitude of the Government, we would like to participate in the parliamentary proceedings under pressure.

*Not recorded

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Sir, I would just like to point out one thing. I had no intention of intervening. I entirely agree with your observation, and on behalf of the Government, I would like to assure you that whatever be your directions, we will follow it. Even when this *impasse* began, at the beginning, the Prime Minister talked to the Leaders of the Opposition of both the Houses and the Chairperson of NDA and requested them to participate in the proceedings of the House. As the Leader of the House, umpteen number of times, I have appealed to them through media that they should participate. They are all along insisting that only the Prime Minister should go on repeating the appeal. We do not consider the NDA as our enemy. Political opponents are there in a parliamentary democracy. There would be dissension; there would be divergence of views, and we respect the divergence of views. It is not necessary that we should agree with it, but we must have respect to each other's view, which you have repeatedly emphasised.

I join you in requesting the Leaders of the Opposition parties to participate in the debate. On behalf of the Government, I can assure them that whatever they want to discuss, which is permitted by you under the rules, the Government will be prepared to provide time. I am, again, appealing to them to participate in the proceedings of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: I think, this is the spirit which should permeate every side. I, once again, as I have already said, request them to reconsider their decision.

11.08 hrs.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

National Rail Vikas Yojana

*561. ⁺ SHRI T. K. HAMZA:

SHRI MAHESH KANODIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of the National Rail Vikas Yojana (NRYV) which was announced in August, 2002;

(b) the amount spent on this project so far;

(c) whether the Government has appointed any Committee to monitor and evaluate the progress of work done on this project; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) A total of 70 projects costing about Rs.20200 crore have presently been identified for implementation through National Rail Vikas Yojana (NRVY) which is largely a non-budgetary initiative. Out of these projects, 37 projects are of Golden Quadrilateral & Diagonals, 29 of Port Connectivity and 4 of Mega Bridges.

Out of the 70 projects, 52 projects are sanctioned and 18 projects are yet to be sanctioned. Out of the sanctioned projects, 10 projects have already been completed and 42 projects are in various stages of progress. 7 projects are targeted for completion during 2005-06.

The expenditure on NRVY projects during 2003-04 and 2004-05 (provisional) is Rs.627 crore and Rs.743 crore respectively, i.e., a total of Rs. 1370 crore (approximately).

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Committee comprises of Railway Board officers viz. Additional Member/Planning, Additional Member/Works, Additional Member/Budget, Additional Member/Commercial, Additional Member/Signal and Additional Member/Electrical. The Committee is to monitor all aspects of implementation of National Rail Vikas Yojana including raising of non-budgetary resources. Further, projects costing Rs.100 crore and above are being monitored by the Empowered Committee under the Chairmanship of Member Engineering, Railway Board, which inter alia includes projects of NRVY also.

SHRI T. K. HAMZA: Out of 70 projects that were identified, 10 projects have been completed. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether any assessment has been made on the basis of an evaluation to find out whether the work has been completed within the stipulated time, and what is the percentage of achievement.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, these 70 projects have been contemplated under the National Rail Vikas Yojana. Out of these 70 projects, 37 projects relate to Golden Quadrilateral, 29 projects relate to Port Connectivity, and 4 projects relate to Mega Bridges. The hon. Member said that only ten projects have been completed and he wanted to know about the kind of evaluation made to complete them. These projects come under the non-budgetary initiative undertaken by the Railways. The funding part constitutes private participation in the projects, funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and some amount of budgetary support. Initially, there was some problem in identifying the projects in terms of whether they are bankable or not.

Initially, there was some problem in identifying whether the projects are bankable; if they are not bankable, to evaluate whether it can be done outside RVNL which is created as a special purpose vehicle. Those things can be taken up by the Railways. There is a Committee consisting of six Additional Members of the Railway Board to evaluate those projects. The bottlenecks in these projects are being taken into account. There is also an empowered Committee under the Chairmanship of Member (Engineering) to evaluate the projects that are worth more than Rs.100 crore. So, these are the two Committees which are evaluating the projects. I assure the hon. Members that these projects will be completed by the end of 2008 with proper monitoring and evaluation.

SHRI T.K. HAMZA: May I know if any project has been identified in Kerala as part of the National Rail Vikas Yojana? If so, is it completed or is it under progress?

SHRI R. VELU: In Kerala, we have got one project under the Port Connectivity and that is the Vallarpadam-Irapally Container Project. The RVNL has evaluated it only to find that the rate of return is 8.33%. As a result, RVNL is requesting the Port Authority to take up the work on their own.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Mahesh Kanodia - Not present.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJARAM PAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon'ble Minister has sanctioned 52 projects out of 70 projects and talked about sanctioning of another 18 projects. The work pertaining to 10 projects has been completed. Uttar Pradesh is the largest state of the country. Sir, through you, I would like to know from the hon'ble Minister whether there is any action plan for Uttar Pradesh under Golden Quadrilateral Project? Is there any proposal for laying broad gauge rail line from Mandhana to Bithur Road at Kanpur-Farrukhabad line, in my constituency Bilhaur, Kanpur City?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, you have made your point. No repetition please.

SHRI R. VELU: There are three projects of Golden Quadrilaterals in Uttar Pradesh, namely, Aligarh-Ghaziabad third line, doubling of Kanpur-Chanderi line, and Kanpur-Panki third line. The hon. Member has particularly asked about his Constituency. Perhaps he would write to me separately and I will let him know about it. ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No, I would not allow this. Question Hour is not meant for indefinite questions.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN: I understand that a total of 70 projects costing about Rs.20,200 crore have been identified. There is a standing complaint that some Southern States, particularly Tamil Nadu and Kerala, are neglected in the matter of development. Will the Minister be pleased to state as to whether this complaint will be eliminated when all these projects are completed? I would also like to seek a clarification from the Minister. There is a mention that 37 projects of Golden Quadrilateral and Diagonals; and 29 projects of Port Connectivity have been identified. Will the Minister please explain about the connectivity of ports and the connectivity of State Capitals to the Golden Quadrilateral, especially with reference to the Southern States?

MR. SPEAKER: All those details cannot be given now.

SHRI R. VELU: National Rail Vikas Yojana, as I mentioned earlier, is not meant for the development of railways in all places. It is meant to develop the Quadrilateral and also to have port connectivity wherever it is possible, where exports and imports are there, and where there is movement of containers, etc.

Thirdly, the mega bridges which are located across Ganga, Kosi and Brahmaputra are specially created projects. Accordingly, Rail Vikas Nigam Limited was also created as a special purpose vehicle to raise resources, to create organisations to go into the market wholly, and also to take the strategic partners to see that these projects are implemented.

Regarding the specific question raised from my friend from Kerala that the Southern States, particularly, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are neglected, I only share his concern. If at all they are neglected, I will look into it. I do not think they are neglected.

As I mentioned earlier, Tamil Nadu has got four small projects under Quadrilateral projects and two port-connectivity projects and as I mentioned earlier there is one for the State of Kerala. He should be happy to hear this. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: This is not a general discussion. Please sit down, Mr. Minister.

SHRI N. S. V. CHITTHAN: Sir, I agree with the views expressed by my colleague, Shri Radhakrishnan. I would like to thank the hon. Minister for his reply.

My specific question is this. Tamil Nadu is lagging behind all other Southern States in the case of gauge conversion and new projects. I would like to know out of 70 projects under the scheme, as to how many projects

are there in Tamil Nadu? Is there any special effort to increase the number of projects pertaining to Tamil Nadu?

MR. SPEAKER: These are not specific questions.

SHRI R. VELU: I would like to answer his specific question, Sir. There are four quadrilateral projects in Tamil Nadu and two projects are related to port-connectivity. If he wants the details, I can give just now.

MR. SPEAKER : No, not now.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ NARAYAN BUDHOLIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon'ble Minister has informed about 70 projects and hon'ble Member Pal Saheb asked a question regarding Uttar Pradesh through which I got half of the answer to my question. But Bundelkhand area also comes under Uttar Pradesh and Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda, Chitrakut, Jhansi, Jalaun and Lalitpur districts are located in this area. I would like to know as to what activities are being carried out for the development of railways there? Is there any proposal to sanction any scheme in future for the construction of over-bridges and big bridges there? If so, by which time?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Member, no, this is not allowed. This is a special question on special projects. You are not supposed to ask this type of question.

Mr. Minister, are you considering expanding this scheme?

SHRI R. VELU: I would only consider this question and state the fact that in the case of Uttar Pradesh, there are three quadrilateral projects and three port-connectivity projects.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, you should utilise the Question Hour more effectively.

[Translation]

SHRI RAGHUNATH JHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from hon'ble Minister the name of the projects of Bihar out of the 37 projects which are proposed to be taken up under golden quadrilateral project. I would like to know whether or not Ganga bridge of Patna, Ganga bridge of Munger and Kosi Bridge of Kosi-Mansi have been included in the four mega bridges which are being constructed? If so, the time by which they are targeted to be completed?

[English]

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, the hon. Member wanted to know as to how many projects are there in Bihar under this scheme. Bihar has got two projects under the port-

connectivity, namely, Barauni-Tilrat Bye-pass and Mansi-Saharsa-Purnea project

Regarding the specific question about mega projects, out of the four mega projects, which are contemplated, three relate to Bihar, namely, Monghyr bridge, Patna-Ganga bridge and Kosi bridge. The cost of Monghyr bridge is about Rs.921 crore; Patna-Ganga bridge is Rs.624 crore; and Kosi bridge is Rs.323 crore. These cannot be completed by 2008. These will take a longer time. When we approached the World Bank, it said that these are very big projects, which cannot be rail projects but they can only be Government of India projects. Accordingly, now we are trying to implement the projects from the funds out of the General Budget.

MR. SPEAKER: Nobody has asked about West Bengal!

SHRI R. VELU: As the hon. Speaker has asked about the West Bengal, I wish to state that West Bengal has not at all been ignored.

In port connectivity, we have got one project; under Golden Quadrilateral, we have got four projects. In all, five projects are there. I give the details of the projects of West Bengal. First is the Tikiapara-Santragachi line, (2) Gurap-Shaktigarh; (3) Panskura-Kharagpur; and (4) Chandanpur-Gurap.

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry, I have taken too much of your time.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, there is one more project, I will tell you about that.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the National Rail Vikas Yojana is an excellent project. It pertains to the Golden Quadrilateral, diagonal port connectivity and port mega projects. The previous NDA Government had launched this project and they had decided to complete this project by 2010. This is a non-budgetary allocation. Will this Government be able to complete it by 2010? If so, how are they going to get the funds? In the last two years, the expenditure incurred is only Rs. 1,370 crore. At this rate, how can you complete this project by 2010?

SHRI R. VELU: As the hon. Member put it, we accept the fact that there was an initial handicap in mobilising the resources. As I told the House, Rs.3,000 crore is being placed at the disposal of RVNL of which Rs. 1,500 crore is from ADB and another Rs. 1,500 crore is from the Budget. The whole project contemplates Golden Quadrilateral at a cost of Rs.8,000 crore, port connectivity at a cost of:

Rs.3,000 crore, and mega Bridge projects at a cost of Rs.3,500 crore. In all, it comes to Rs. 14,500 crore. As I said, we are creating a number of Special Purpose Vehicles to borrow from the market. The State Governments, stakeholders and railways also will constitute the corpus so that necessary funding is created. I assure the hon. Member - as I had mentioned - that in the matter of five years, by the year ending 2,008, all these projects would be completed. That is why, we have created RVNL. This is for the information of the hon. Member.

Expenditure on Security at Airports

*562. + SHRI S. K. KHARVENTHAN:

SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of airports in the country where CISF personnel are deployed for security;

(b) the number of CISF personnel deployed for security at the airports and the actual expenses incurred thereon during each of the last three years;

(c) whether the deployment of CISF at the airports is more expensive as compared to the State Police;

(d) if so, the facts thereof;

(e) whether there is any proposal to increase the airport tax to meet the expenditure on security at the airports; and

(f) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (f) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) CISF personnel have been deployed at 47 airports till date.

(b) Number of CISF personnel deployed for security at airports and the actual Revenue & Capital expenses incurred thereon during each of the last three years are as under:-

Year	No.	Amount (Rs. in lakhs)
2001-02	6158	62.76
2002-03	9683	236.80
2003-04	11737	289.14

(c) and (d) In view of the heightened threat perception the parameters for deployment of CISF have been finalised. Thus the number of CISF personnel deployed is at variance from the State Police. Further, as the CISF personnel are to be extended facilities as per the guidelines formulated by the Government, the expenditure is likely to be higher. Moreover, expenditure is also being incurred on Capital side including accommodations, security equipments etc.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Does not arise.

SHRI S. K. KHARVENTHAN: How many culprits have been arrested? How many cases of arms and ammunition have been detected by the CISF till date in various airports during the last year?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, the question relates to the details of number of CISF personnel deployed in the airports. I can broadly answer this question and I will furnish the exact details to him later on. In the year 2004-05, CISF recovered properties worth approximately Rs.5 crore and returned it to the rightful owners. As far as cases which are there, normally the procedure is that the CISF hands over such cases to the local police for appropriate action. About the number of cases, I will inform the hon. Member separately after getting the full details.

SHRI S. K. KHARVENTHAN: Very recently, a Member of our Government was harassed at Madurai Airport in Tamil Nadu by the CISF personnel. The hon. Minister returned without boarding the aircraft. I would like to know whether the Ministry has received any report on that. What are the steps the Government is going to take to prevent unnecessary harassment of passengers by CISF in future?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, I am extremely sorry if there is any incident which involves a Union Minister. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Did he say Minister?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: He said, "Union Minister was arrested." ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. K. KHARVENTHAN: One of our hon. Minister was harassed at Madurai Airport by CISF personnel and he had to cancel the journey. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: My apologies, Sir. He said 'harassed' and I heard it as 'arrested'. Sir, there are laid down procedures with CISF. One of the reasons, for which CISF was introduced, was to standardise the operating procedure for all categories of people and all passengers

travelling through various airports. However, this incident, which has been brought to my notice now-which, unfortunately, was not brought to my notice so far and neither I have heard about it - I will definitely ascertain the facts. I can assure the hon. Member, and I will try to speak to the hon. Minister, to see that if there is something which is lacking.

MR. SPEAKER: He says that there is general harassment.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: On that issue, I can assure you one thing. There are, of course, sporadic cases here and there of such complaints which reach us. The objective of introducing this CISF, as I mentioned earlier, was to standardise the operating procedure. The CISF was brought in after the hijacking of the aircraft of Indian Airlines in December 1999. A Committee of Secretaries was set up by the Cabinet to decide on deployment of CISF personnel at the domestic airports.

Sir, I have been in touch with the CISF. I have been meeting the Director-General; I have been talking to the senior officers. We are trying to see that the number of such incidents is reduced and also specialised training is given. The CISF has also assured that the best personnel that they have - the elite of their Force - are being posted at the airports. Considering the sensitivities involved and because there is a lot of human interface, passengers or people from other countries also visit places through our airports, the best possible people with best behaviour should be deployed. That has been our endeavour.

SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAIISI: Sir, the dimensions of airports' security have changed significantly after the hijacking of IC-184 and the 9/11 incident. Will the hon. Minister be kind enough to say categorically that, in the light of the total expenditure incurred by the Airports Authority of India on security, which is nearly Rs. 200 crore, the passenger Service Tax is adequate to take care of security measures? Will he explore the possibility of setting up a dedicated Civil Aviation Security Force, under the administrative control of the Civil Aviation Ministry? It will not only be beneficial from the point of view of administrative control but also result in employment generation. Sir, only three per cent of India's population use planes. So, what steps are being taken to ensure that air travel is hassle free?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, the issues raised by the hon. Member are the following - whether there is a proposal to set up a separate Division within the Ministry of Civil Aviation for security at the airports. The answer is that it is not necessary because CISF is also a specialised Force.

They would probably be performing the same amount of duties what other force would probably do. However, Sir, the CISF, as I mentioned earlier, is deploying its finest people. It is an on-going thing. We are learning and we are trying to improve the services so that the passenger harassment is reduced and passenger courtesies are extended to the fullest.

In terms of passenger service fee, which is being levied, as of now, it is more or less adequate and suffice. It is able to meet the expenses which are being incurred on security at the airports.

[Translation]

SHRI REWATI RAMAN SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, at present photography is prohibited at airports, whereas no such prohibition is there in foreign countries. Photograph of each airport can be taken from satellite. It can automatically take photographs of any place even if it is a sensitive one. I would like to know whether hon'ble Minister will consider to withdraw this ban on taking photographs at airports, which has been imposed from security's point of view.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, I would like to tell the hon'ble Member that according to the old rule, which was in force for a long time, photography aerial and at the airport was prohibited but this rule has been changed and now photography is not prohibited in every civilian enclave. I would not like to talk about defence, because he also understands that their security requirements are different. But the law, which so far prohibited photography at civilian enclaves and from aeroplane, has been totally relaxed? I also understand when photographs can be taken from satellite and sky, then there is no danger to our security from photographs. That is why this rule has already been changed.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: They are also taken secretly through mobile phones.

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: Sir, through you, I would like to ask the hon. Minister a question in two parts. The first part is, is there a Bureau of Civil Aviation Security within the Ministry of Civil Aviation; and if there is any, what is its role, in the light of the fact that CISF is now deployed at airports? Part two of my question to the hon. Minister is, both the Centre and the State are trying very hard to promote tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. Anybody who has travelled through Srinagar Airport as an ordinary person and not as a VIP would realize the level of harassment that

average passengers go through in the name of security, with baggage being checked, X-rayed, opened and unpacked almost 3-4 times before passengers are able to get on to the plane. Would the hon. Minister consider streamlining some of the security parameters that are in place, without threatening the security of the average passengers?

MR. SPEAKER: It is a good question.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security is more like a supervisor and a regulator of the security mechanism and CISF is the operating arm. CISF deploys its personnel and does other work of looking after the airports. The BCAS is like a regulator which looks after the overall security aspect. The CISF guides the airport authority as to how to proceed. The BCAS's role is not only limited to airports; it has a full aviation security related regulatory function. This is the difference.

As far as Srinagar Airport is concerned, we must all accept that there are extra-ordinary precautions always taken in such sensitive airports. However, we will try to find it out because CISF is not looking after the security of Srinagar Airport. Srinagar Airport is still under the jurisdiction of the State Police and it is also a defence enclave. However since we come into the picture because of the terminal and other facilities, I will have your concerns in mind and I will personally try, in whichever way we can, to reduce the hardships to the passengers.

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Manoj, do you have a question?

DR. K. S. MANOJ: As many hon. Members have pointed out, the behaviour of CISF personnel towards the passengers is not courteous.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister has assured that he will see to it.

DR. K. S. MANOJ: Okay. I have a pointed question to the hon. Minister.

Apart from giving training to manage law and order and security situations, may I know whether the Ministry is giving any sort of training to these personnel in public relations, communication skills, etc.? Another question is may I know whether the Ministers and Members of Parliament are exempt from strict security check up in the airports in India?

MR. SPEAKER: For Speakers, it is not there!

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: I can assure the hon. Members that CISF is itself undertaking a lot of training; I would say

that it is working towards making CISF more user-friendly — let us put it this way. It is also conducting its own checks, it is having its own market research and getting the reports so that it gets a feedback of what people are thinking about CISF.

I had also been as much a passenger as others are, before becoming a Minister. I do not think that there is any concession which is accorded to any Member of Parliament or to any Minister. However, they do get a little bit of extra protocol in terms of trying to be extra courteous and trying to see that they do not have to stand in line, etc. But I can state that we do not give any special relaxation for Members of Parliament. These are the standards as laid down by the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as by the BCAS.

[Translation]

SHRI VIJOY KRISHNA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon'ble Minister has given a good statement regarding security and deployment of central security forces. Bodhgaya is an important and historical place of Bihar and India as well and there is also an airport. I would like to know whether by providing special security at Bodhgaya airport through central security forces and assuming Gaya, Varanasi and Patna as one circuit, international flights will be operated from these airports.

[English]

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: It does not arise out of the main question. However, I can assure the hon. Member. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: If you are too accommodating, such questions will come. Since you have stood up to answer it, you may reply if you wish.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Varanasi, Bodhgaya and Patna are very important from the tourists circuit and I can assure you that we are trying to see that some way we can involve people to come and invest in these three airports as a special package, especially because they form part of the Buddhist circuit, and otherwise also they are important areas of our country.

[Translation]

SHRI KULDEEP BISHNOI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, recently a news item was published in newspapers that a private agency is being engaged for security arrangement at Indira Gandhi Airport, Delhi and a number of irregularities are being committed in this work causing loss to the tune of lakhs of rupees to the Government. I would like to ask the

hon. Minister, through you, whether the work of providing security at the Indira Gandhi airport Delhi has been assigned to any private agency and if so, whether the hon'ble Minister is aware that irregularities are being committed in this work? If so, what action is being taken by the Government against the guilty officers and the company?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: So far as I know, there is no such arrangement in the matter of passengers at Indira Gandhi Airport but the security arrangement of cargo complex is being provided through some outside agencies. But I would like to say it definitely that this security arrangement has been entrusted to private agencies only after the Bureau of Civil Aviation had given security clearance for the entire area.

[English]

SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY: My esteemed colleagues have already spoken about the behaviour and conduct of CISF staff. I have a particular suggestion to make. Since there are a lot of educated unemployed youths in the country. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: It does not arise from the main question.

SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY: For refining the conduct of the staff, necessary qualification is essential. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: There is a very specialised security.

SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY: Since there are a lot of unemployed youths in the country, can the Government consider prescribing a higher qualification so that their conduct is refined a little?

MR. SPEAKER: I am sure, there will be a talk about the replacement of these Members who are not functioning!

Mr. Minister, do you want to answer?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: No, Sir.

[Translation]

Investment in Overseas Projects

*563. ⁺ DR. CHINTA MOHAN:

SHRI UDAY SINGH:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has decided to

invest several million dollars abroad keeping in view the need for uninterrupted supply of petroleum products in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the measures taken by the Government to ensure uninterrupted availability of petroleum products at reasonable prices to the consumers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Investment in Overseas Projects

(a) and (b) In keeping with the Energy Security objectives of the National Common Minimum Programme, Government have directed ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL), the wholly owned subsidiary of ONGC engaged in E&P activities abroad as well as other national oil companies such as Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOC), Oil India Ltd. (OIL) and Gail (India) Ltd. (GAIL) to pursue opportunities for acquisition of equity oil and gas abroad, as well as acquisition of exploration acreages and producing properties. These companies have Participating Interests in oil and gas projects located in Vietnam, Sudan, Russia, Iraq, Iran, Myanmar, Libya, Syria, Australia, Ivory Coast, Qatar and Egypt. At present, committed investment overseas by these companies is of the order of \$ 5 billion.

OVL, in association with other oil sector PSUs, is aggressively scouting for E&P opportunities in countries perceived to be hydrocarbons-rich.

(c) The requirement of petroleum products in the country is being met by indigenous refining and, to the limited extent required, through imports. While, however, the country is virtually self sufficient in petroleum products, and, indeed, exported nearly Rs. 25,000 crores of petroleum products in 2004-2005, it is over 70 per cent dependent on imports for its crude oil requirements, a figure likely to increase to 85% over the next 20 years. Thus, international crude prices impact heavily on domestic prices and have to be factored in when determining the domestic pricing policy for sensitive petroleum products such as petrol, diesel, LPG and Kerosene. Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have, therefore, been restrained from passing on the full increase in international prices to domestic consumer prices of these products. Petrol, diesel and LPG prices have not been revised since November, 2004; kerosene prices have remained frozen

since April, 2002. Government too have been repeatedly revising customs and excise duties since June, 2004 to moderate the impact of the spike in international prices on domestic consumers. Moreover, although with effect from 1 August 2004, Government had authorized a price band mechanism allowing OMCs freedom to revise the prices of petrol and diesel within the prescribed price band, the steep and volatile increase in the international prices of crude oil resulted in the ceiling of the price band being breached within weeks of its being made operational. Therefore, the mechanism has since been held in abeyance.

[English]

DR. CHINTA MOHAN: Sir, the Minister's statement in reply to part (c) of my question mentions about the volatile international price and purchase. May I know from the hon. Minister who actually is involved in the purchase of crude oil; how is he going to regulate it, and how is he going to justify that his actions are correct?

MR. SPEAKER: What is your supplementary? Why has he taken a decision?

DR. CHINTA MOHAN: No, Sir. My question is this. Who is involved in the purchase of oil and how the Minister is going to justify that his actions are correct.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: First, I would like to say that I am not at all involved in the purchase of crude. Secondly, the purchase of crude is largely done in India, as far as the public sector is concerned, by M/s. Indian Oil Corporation Limited although the other oil refining companies have been given permission to purchase crude on their own. They do some of it but not all of it. Private refineries are, of course, entitled to purchase what their requirements are. The general rule is that around 80 per cent of our import of crude oil is through long-term contracts that are entered into with the national oil companies of the supplying countries. But because we have to take advantage of cargoes that might be offered at somewhat more competitive prices, we have been encouraging our oil companies to purchase spot-cargo as well and the current ratio is about 60:40. Whatever purchases are made, are made in consultation with a mechanism that is long established within the Government for a kind of supervision, a general overview, of the purchasing activities.

If there are any specific instances of malfeasance which have come to the attention of the hon. Member, I would be more than happy to have those specifically investigated.

DR. CHINTA MOHAN: In the crude oil purchase we need to be more healthy and transparent. Is the Minister planning to bring in any new regulation in this regard?

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Our purchases of crude oil are healthy and transparent.

Shri Uday Singh — Not present.

SHRI SURESH KURUP: Sir, the Government has been repeatedly telling the people of this country that since the price of international crude is every day becoming higher and higher, it is forced to hike the price of petroleum products. The fact is that we have our own crude, our own refinery and also the refineries which refine the imported crude. So, the Government need not charge at par with the international price. My question is this. Will the Government realistically approach this problem and reduce the price of the crude oil, which is explored and refined in this country and also reduce the price of the crude, which is imported and refined in this country and thereby reduce the price of the petroleum products? A Government, which is committed to the people, should consider it.

MR. SPEAKER: That is not the part of the question.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: As a Government that is committed to the people, I might assure the hon. Member that we are doing everything to keep control over petroleum products prices. We have taken very-very severe hits in the oil sector by freezing the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG since November 2004, close to six months ago, notwithstanding the spike in international price that has taken place and the price of kerosene remains the same today as it was in April 2002. But it is unreasonable. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: No interruption is required.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: It is unreasonable to imagine that, where we are importing already more than 70 per cent of our crude oil requirements and this import dependency is expected to rise to 85 per cent over the next 20 years, we can insulate ourselves from the impact of the rise in international crude oil prices except for some limited period of time. We are engaged in a consensus building process at the moment, which involves also the political party to which the hon. Member belongs and I hope that we will arrive at a decision with respect to pricing policy that will equitably share the burden between consumers, oil marketing companies and the Government.

I think the hon. Member will appreciate that as a result of the changes in customs and excise duties during the course of the last calendar year, Government revenues have been substantially reduced to the extent of several thousands of crores and while the Budget proposals before us just now are, for the whole oil sector, revenue neutral,

the greatest achievements have been secured by the most sensitive products which are Kerosene and LPG.

SHRI MILIND DEORA: Sir, India's demand for oil is a well known fact. It is second only to China globally. Hence any measures for international regional cooperation are very welcome and would go a long way in ensuring our energy security. I have two specific questions for the Minister.

Firstly, what is the status of the Indo-Iran pipeline through Pakistan which will allow us to import 7.5 million tonnes of LNG? It would also allow us to develop two gas fields and one oil field.

Secondly, as per the newspaper reports sometime back, whether the Government is planning to invest around two billion dollars into Yukos, a Russian company keeping in mind its outstanding liability to the Russian Government.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: I am very grateful to the hon. Member for the two very intelligent and meaningful questions that he has asked. There is a slight confusion, however, in the first question. We are, at the moment, negotiating the import of 7.5 million tonnes of LNG from Iran. That project is going to be by cryogenic ships and not by the pipeline. The pipeline project is for natural gas and not for LNG.

In so far as the LNG is concerned, our team is, at the present moment in Iran. They have been keeping me informed of the progress of negotiations. I am hoping that many items of the term sheet would have been completed by the time they come back. But the indications are that a visit by me to Iran next month might be necessary to completely seal the deal. But who knows. Our negotiators are very able and perhaps they will succeed in sealing the deal even before I myself proceed to Iran.

The second part of the question related to Yukos. We have indicated to the Russian company, Rosneft — which has become the owner of the Yukos assets — that we would be interested in being considered for part or full ownership of that very renowned and highly potential asset. Rosneft had indicated directly to me when I was in Moscow in February that we were a partner, perhaps even a preferred partner of theirs, in acquiring some kind of participating interest in that.

At the same time, there were legal complications and the Russian side assured us that until they were satisfied that we would not suffer on account of any kind of legal complication, they did not want us to go ahead with the deal. But we remain very much in the picture. However, it is only when we get a signal from them that they would like us to get into negotiating details that we will be progressing that project further.

[Translation]

SHRI CHHEWANG THUPSTAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, first of all I want to compliment the hon. Minister for ensuring that the petroleum products are made available to the consumer in the country at very reasonable prices despite the fact that there has been a marked fluctuation in the crude-petroleum prices internationally. I want to bring a fact to the notice of the hon. Minister regarding which I have even written a letter to him and which we have promised also in the UPA's Common Minimum Programme that the Government will supply petroleum products to far flung areas of the country at reasonable prices. Ladakh is in the notice of hon. Minister. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Does it arise out of the question?

[Translation]

SHRI CHHEWANG THUPSTAN: It does because second part of the question is, that as to what is being done for supplying petroleum products to the consumers in remote areas. Transport cost on supplying petroleum products to the people in remote areas has to be incurred @ Rs.300-400 per cylinder. Earlier, the Petroleum Ministry subsidized the transportation cost but the system has been slightly changed now as a result of which, it is now the consumer who have to bear the brunt of it. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he would like to continue the subsidy as it is?

[English]

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: The system of subsidising supplies to the far-flung and remote areas established over a period of time continues as a policy. There might be some changes every now and then in the quantum of subsidy but the policy remains as it was.

MR. SPEAKER : Q. 564 Shri Braja Kishore Tripathy - Not present

Natural Gas Resources

*564. + SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL:

SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of natural gas resources found in various parts of the country during the last three years, State-wise;

(b) the details of their potential and the extent to which the potential has so far been exploited; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government for optimum utilization of gas resources of the country?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) During the last 3 years from 2001-02 to 2003-04, state-wise in-place accretion of gas reserves by ONGC, OIL and Private/Joint Venture companies are as under:-

State	In-place Reserves in Billion Cubic Metres (BCM)
Andhra Pradesh	11.369
Arunachal Pradesh	3.690
Assam	37.758
Gujarat	9.928
Rajasthan	0.762
Tamil Nadu	9.764
Tripura	6.339
Total	79.610

In addition, 364.28 BCM of in-place gas reserves were accreted in offshore areas in the corresponding period.

So far, out of 79.61 BCM in-place reserves in onland areas, 56.49 BCM have been established as recoverable reserves.

(c) Administered Price Mechanism (APM) gas, produced by ONGC and OIL and purchased by GAIL from the Private/Joint Venture sector, is being supplied against allocations made by the Government, priority being given to the power and fertilizer sectors. With respect to gas produced by Private/Joint Ventures, where they have freedom to market the gas or have been allowed to make their own arrangements for marketing the gas as per the provisions of the respective Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), these are governed by the terms of the PSCs.

As against the current APM allocation of about 120 Million Metric Standard Cubic Metres per Day (MMSCMD), the availability of APM gas is only about 63 MMSCMD. In addition, about 12 MMSCMD of domestic gas and about 18 MMSCMD of imported Re-gasified LNG is being sold to various consumers at market-related price.

With a view to substantially augmenting the availability of gas within the country, the following steps are being taken:-

- (i) Under successive rounds of the 1997 New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP), several improvements have been and are being made to exponentially enhance investment in the exploration and production of natural gas, both onshore and offshore, by attracting public and private sector investment and Foreign Direct Investment, as well as encouraging partnerships among interested national and foreign players.
- (ii) Award of Coal Bed Methane Blocks, the first production of which is expected to commence in 2006-07.
- (iii) Underground Coal Gasification in collaboration with the Skochinsky Institute of Mining, Moscow and ERGO of Canada.
- (iv) LNG from Qatar, Iran and, possibly, Australia, as well as natural gas by pipeline from Iran, Myanmar and possibly Turkmenistan: negotiations with them have commenced.
- (v) R&D for gas hydrates.

These initiatives are aimed at substantially reducing and eventually eliminating the demand supply gap of natural gas in the country.

[Translation]

SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I would like to know what steps are proposed to be taken by the Government to start Pipavav and Mundra gas terminals in Gujarat and by when these terminals are likely to be started along with the progress made in this regard.

[English]

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, it does not arise out of the main question.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Patel what is your question. You may please repeat your question.

[Translation]

SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, what progress has been made by the Govt. for starting the gas terminal in Pipavav and Mundra in Gujarat for the supply of gas in the country and what further steps the Government are taking.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: You may write to the hon. Minister and the hon. Minister may give him a written reply.

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, I think, he is referring to ports rather than natural gas reserves. I am not quite sure how connection is made here. But it is absolutely true that Gujarat is one of our important producers of gas. It is also an area of considerable consumption of gas. We continue to attach the highest importance to the role of Gujarat in the national economy in the field of natural gas.

MR. SPEAKER: You may take note of the two places he mentioned.

[Translation]

SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Govt. has failed to achieve the production target of natural gas in the Tenth plan. I would like to know which are proposed to be adopted by the Govt. to meet the target?

[English]

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, there are on-going efforts to increase the production of oil and gas in the country. But the hon. Member would appreciate that this is a very high cost and high risk business. It is not possible to accurately predict where we are going to find oil or gas. When it will emerge, there is a whole panoply of measures being put in place by the Government under the NEL P-V Scheme and other techniques such as improved and enhanced oil recovery to substantially increase the availability of oil and natural gas in this country in keeping with our energy security requirements.

PROF. BASU DEB BARMAN: Sir, out of 364.28 billion cubic metres of in-place gas reserves in off-shore areas, how many billion cubic metres have been established as recoverable reserves? In the reply the recoverable reserves for the on-land areas has been stated by the Minister. For the comprehension of the common man I would like to know as to what is the oil equivalent of these gas reserves in terms of million tonnes of crude oil?

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, let me first state that our prognosticated reserves, that is the total quantity of reserves we hope to be able to find in the country on-shore and off-shore is of the order of 32 billion metric tonnes, or, in millions of metric tonnes, it is 32,000 million metric tonnes. When it comes to establishing what are the recoverable gas reserves, may I just offer a clarification that we go in three stages. First, the initial in-place reserves are established after a process of exploration, then out of

these initial in-place reserves, what geologists believe to be the ultimate reserve from those in-place reserves, and then, finally, once it starts coming out what remains as the balance is the recoverable reserves. These are the three broad categories in which we look at our reserves.

Sir, the initial in-place reserves of oil and gas as oil equivalent in India at the moment is of the order of 7,900 million, it means 7.9 billion tonnes. The established ultimate recoverable reserves are 2900 million tonnes or 2.9 billion tonnes, and the balance recoverable reserves are of the order of 1600 million tonnes or 1.6 billion tonnes.

SHRIMATI M. S. K. BHAVANI RAJENTHIRAN: Sir, a large quantity of natural gas is available in my area. I would request the hon. Minister, through you, to start an industry for filling up gas in cylinders as it will surely help in solving the problem of unemployment and also help in the growth of economy in my area. Will the Minister consider my request?

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, finding gas and supply it is certainly my Ministerial responsibility but setting up industries for that gas falls in the jurisdiction of others. However, I am glad to say that, in the Ramanathapuram area, we have succeeded in finding customers for not just the gas that we are producing but for far more gas that we are producing and our present task is to ensure whether we can step up and supply more gas to potential consumers in the Ramanathapuram area.

[Translation]

SHRI ALOK KUMAR MEHTA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the gases emanating from dung and human excreta are being put to domestic use through their exploitation by the non-governmental organizations in an unorganized manner. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Govt. has any effective scheme for using such gases as an alternative source of gas so that the pressure on other sources may be reduced?

[English]

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Government as a whole does, of course has several schemes for traditional and non-conventional energy but my remit is restricted to fossil fuels. We would be more than happy to encourage use of biomass fuels. But I am afraid that the responsibility to do so rests in a colleague of mine.

[Translation]

SHRI V. K. THUMMAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in his reply to the original question hon. Minister has stated that Gujarat is occupies third place in the field of natural gas resources. The hon. Minister's priorities are to provide gas in the field

of power and fertiliser. The huge gas reserves found in Gujarat justifies the laying of foundation stone by Late Shri Rajiv ji for the setting up of a project in Pipavav for gas supply. He had also given an assurance to the effect of starting production of gas. I want to know clearly from hon. Minister whether any provision has been made separately for supply of gas in Pipavav or not?

SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR: Sir, I am afraid the question of utilising our Gas reserves of Gujarat are indeed considerable and amount to 245 billion cubic metres but this is unconnected with the future of Pipavav. We will certainly look into the future of Pipavav. But I am afraid that would not lead to an increase in any in-place gas reserves in Gujarat.

MR. SPEAKER: Q. No. 565. Shri Kallash Meghwal — not present

Fleet Utilization

*566. DR. M. JAGANNATH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the utilization of fleet of Air India and Indian Airlines is lower than the industry average in the past few years;

(b) if so, whether the steps taken by the Government during the past few years to increase the fleet utilization of these public sector organizations remained ineffective;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the corrective measures proposed to be taken to improve the fleet utilization of these Airlines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) No, Sir. In fact, the average utilization of fleet by Air India and Indian Airlines is higher than the industry average.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

DR. M. JAGANNATH: Sir, the answer given by the hon. Minister is vague and not convincing. It does not contain any particulars about the present fleet of aircraft and the average utilisation.

MR. SPEAKER: Do not read it. He has already answered it. I can allow only one supplementary now.

DR. M. JAGANNATH: What is the average requirement of the fleet and how many aircraft does the Indian Airlines and the Air India have?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: The average utilisation of fleet in India for all types of aircraft is probably higher than the industry average. In the case of Indian Airlines, there are 200 aircraft of B-737. There are a lot of figures. I will provide the yearwise, craftwise, categorywise and the world average figures to the hon. Member in writing. I can assure that it is higher than the world standard.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Compensation to Landmine Victims

*565. **SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL:** Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that, hundreds of common citizens are either losing their lives or suffering disability in the Indian territory falling along Pakistan border due to landmines having not been cleared properly;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether adequate compensation is not being paid for damage caused due to the landmines;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor alongwith the amount of compensation being paid to the landmine victims;

(e) whether the residents evicted from the areas where landmines were laid, have to face a lot of difficulties in the absence of any rehabilitation scheme; and

(f) if so, the corrective measures being taken to provide relief and security to them?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (f) Mine laying activities are intrinsic part of the Army's operational philosophy and are guided by operational considerations for ensuring territorial integrity. Laying of mines and demining is carried out in accordance with well laid down procedures. It was observed during 'Operation Parakram' that some incidents of fatal and non fatal casualties occurred resulting in loss of life or disability. This could be due to various reasons like accidental straying into the minefields by human beings or cattle, sinking or drifting away of mines due to the nature

of ground and terrain as well as environmental conditions or tugging of mines by rodents leading to their displacement from the original site.

To provide relief to the victims and their families, Government issued detailed policy guidelines in March 2002 and January 2003 to provide compensation to the farmers whose land was utilised for laying mines as also 'Ex-gratia' Compensation Package for Land Mine civilian casualties. The compensation is paid to the land mine victims as per the established procedure.

Separately, compensation is also paid to the farmers whose land is utilized for mine laying.

A sum of Rs. 294.87 Cr approximately has been paid in the last three years (upto 31st March 2005) as compensation to land mine victims and also towards crop and rental compensation. With the efforts put in by the Army, almost the entire land which was taken for laying mines, has now been cleared.

In addition, sanction has also been accorded by the Government in January 2004 to provide artificial limbs to the victims of land mine blasts to facilitate their rehabilitation.

[English]

Amit Mitra Committee

*567. **SHRI ARJUN SETHI:** Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the recommendations made by Dr. Amit Mitra Committee, constituted by the Government to make recommendations for 2nd Phase of FM Radio broadcasting;

(b) the recommendations which have been accepted by the Government so far and the action taken for its implementation;

(c) the recommendations which have not been accepted by the Government alongwith the reasons therefor; and

(d) the number of radio stations proposed to be set up in various parts of the country during the current year alongwith the locations thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Dr. Amit Mitra Committee made recommendations for Phase II of private FM radio broadcasting on various issues including licensing process, license fee,

networking, co-location, foreign investment and migration. The detailed recommendations of the Committee are available on this Ministry's website (<http://www.mib.nic.in>).

(b) and (c) The recommendations of Mitra Committee were referred to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) for examination and making suitable recommendations to the Government. The recommendations of TRAI have been received. The policy for 2nd phase of private FM radio is under consideration.

(d) More than 300 private FM radio stations at 90 locations across the country are envisaged to be set up in Phase II of private FM radio broadcasting.

Replacement of Level Crossings

*568. SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA:

SHRI SURESH PRABHAKAR PRABHU:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways have offered to replace the level crossings with Road Over Bridge/Under Bridges in return for some concessions in respect of certain levies payable by the Railways to Central revenues;

(b) if so, the estimated cost involved in replacing the level crossings with ROB/RUBs indicating the total number of level crossings in the country, zone-wise; and

(c) the decision taken by the Railways in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD):

(a) No Sir. Railways undertake construction of Road Over/Under Bridge in lieu of busy level crossings having Train Vehicle Units (TVUs) more than 1 lakh on cost sharing basis with State Governments/ Road authorities.

(b) However, the no. of works of Road Over/Under Bridges already sanctioned on cost sharing basis is 428 with a total cost of approx.. Rs.5000 Cr. The no. of level crossings with Train Vehicle Units (TVUs) more than 1 lac and eligible for taking up their replacement by Road Over/Under Bridges on cost sharing basis and where works are yet to be sanctioned is approx. 1247 at a total cost of approximately Rs.15,000 Cr.

Zone wise number of level crossings having TVUs more than 1 lac where ROB/RUBs are yet to be sanctioned is as under:

S.No.	Zones	Total
1	2	3
1.	Central Railway	89
2.	Eastern Railway	87

1	2	3
3.	East Central Railway	20
4.	East Coast Railway	23
5.	Northern Railway	316
6.	North Central Railway	106
7.	North Eastern Railway	42
8.	North Frontier Railway	27
9.	North Western Railway	62
10.	Southern Railway	117
11.	South Central Railway	88
12.	South Eastern Railway	26
13.	South East Central Railway	34
14.	South Western Railway	20
15.	Western Railway	160
16.	West Central Railway	30
Total		1247

(c) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Chartering of Ships for Crude Oil Imports

*569. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH "LALAN":

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has allowed Indian Oil Corporation to go ahead to directly charter ships for crude oil imports;

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

(c) whether similar permission has also been given to other importers;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Ministry of Shipping and Road Transport has been taken into confidence before allowing IOC to directly charter ships for crude oil imports;

(f) If so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Ministry of Shipping and Road Transport thereto; and

(g) the extent to which this decision is helpful to maintain the stability of oil prices?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes. Sir. The world over, major oil companies have their in-house shipping arrangements. Private sector oil companies in India are also free to have their own shipping arrangements. In a deregulated scenario, public sector oil companies have to compete in a free market and, therefore, a level playing field between private and public sector oil companies has to be ensured to bring about utmost economy and efficiency in operations. In view of this, Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC) have been permitted to charter their own tankers for importing crude.

(c) and (d) Among Oil Sector Public Sector Undertakings, only IOC have been permitted to make their own shipping arrangements as they alone have developed the skill and resources for taking over this responsibility.

(e) and (f) While considering the proposal, the Government had taken into consideration the views of all Ministries concerned, including that of Ministry of Shipping.

(g) This arrangement is for chartering ships for oil transportation from foreign landports to discharge ports in India. It is expected to bring further economy and efficiency in operations.

Press Council of India

*570. SHRI HEMMAL MURMU: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the rights and duties of Press Council of India with regard to conduct of inquiries into the credibility and disputes arising out of the news-reports appearing in the newspapers of the country;

(b) the number of complaints received by the Press Council of India in respect of the National Dailies during each of the last three years and current year so far; and

(c) the action taken by Press Council of India thereon?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) The Press Council of India has been established for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the Press; and maintaining and improving the standards of the newspapers in India.

Under Section 14(1) of Press Council Act, 1978, where, on receipt of a complaint made to it or otherwise, the Council has reason to believe that a newspaper or

news agency has offended against the standards of journalistic ethics or public taste or that an editor or a working journalist has committed any professional misconduct, the Council conducts hearing into the complaints through its inquiry committees and after written and oral submission of the parties, the inquiry committees make recommendations in the matters to the full Council for action. If the Council is satisfied that it is necessary so to do, it may for reasons to be recorded in writing warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, the news agency, the editor or journalist or disapprove the conduct of the editor or the journalist as the case may be. For the purpose of performing its functions, the Council have powers to summon and enforce attendance; inspect documents; receive evidence on affidavits; requisition records; undertake relevant studies and to do any other act which may be incidental or conducive to the discharge of duties.

(b) Complaints against Press:

Number of cases filed year-wise:

2001-2002	-	860
2002-2003	-	801
2003-2004	-	660
2004-2005	-	660
Total	-	2981

(c) Total disposal:

Total Number of cases adjudicated between 1.4.2001 to 31.3.2005	504
Total Number of cases disposed of by way of dismissal at preliminary stage between 1.4.2001 to 31.3.2005	2047
	2551

Constitution of Wakf Boards

*571. SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Wakf Act, 1995 has been implemented in all the States;

(b) If not, the names of States where State Wakf Boards have not been constituted under the said Act;

(c) whether difficulty is being faced in trans-

ferring the pending civil cases related to Wakf Board properties to tribunals;

(d) if so, the remedial steps taken in this regard;

(e) the names of States where survey related to Wakf properties has been conducted;

(f) whether the Union Government has directed the State Governments to ask the Government or semi Government agencies to vacate Wakf properties in their possession or to pay rent on market rate; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MEIRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Wakf Act, 1995 was notified on 22.11.1995. However, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Daman and Diu have not constituted the Boards. The Act is not applicable in J&K.

(c) and (d) Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Tripura Wakf Boards have informed of difficulties in getting the pending cases before the civil courts transferred to the Tribunals constituted under section 83 of the Wakf Act. The remedial steps are to be taken by the State Wakf Boards as they are competent to file appeal/revision as per law.

(e) The survey of Wakf properties in States/UTs of Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Dadra and Nagar Haveli has been completed.

(f) and (g) The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has been taking up the matter with the State Governments/UT Administrations from time to time for getting the encroached Wakf properties restored to the Wakf Boards. However, the Boards are competent to initiate proceedings for removal of encroachments as per provisions of the Wakf Act.

[English]

Agreement between India and China

*572. SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY:

SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the India and China have signed any agreement on military co-operation and military confidence building measures along the line of actual control;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the areas of military co-operation identified in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) India and China have signed the following three agreements on military cooperation and military confidence building measures along the Line of Actual Control (LAC):-

- (i) Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the India China Border Areas (September 7, 1993).
- (ii) Agreement on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the India-China border areas (November 29, 1996).
- (iii) Protocol on Implementation of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Military Field along LAC on India - China Border Areas (April 11, 2005).

The following areas of military cooperation have been identified through the above agreements:

- (a) To respect and observe the LAC.
- (b) Prior notification of military exercises near LAC.
- (c) Measures to prevent air intrusions across LAC.
- (d) Management of 'face off' situations in case border personnel of the two sides come in a face-to-face situations due to differences on the perception of location of LAC.
- (e) Conduct of Border Personnel Meetings (BPMs) and Flag Meetings through mutual consultations.
- (f) Conduct of exchanges between institutions of training of two armed forces and institutions of sports and culture of the two armed forces.
- (g) Conduct of exchanges between relevant Military Regions of China and Army Commands of India.
- (h) Prevention of dangerous military activities like opening fire, use of hazardous chemicals and conduct of blast operations within two kilometers from LAC.
- (i) Assistance and return in case personnel of

one side cross the LAC and enter into the other side because of unavoidable circumstances like natural disasters.

- (j) Measures to prevent infectious diseases in border areas from spreading to the other side.

Autonomy to PSEs

*573. SHRI RAYAPATI SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sengupta Panel on greater autonomy for Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) has submitted its report to the Government;

(b) if so, the salient features of the recommendations made thereon;

(c) whether the Government has examined these recommendations made by the Sengupta Panel; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken by the Government to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Ad-hoc Group of Experts headed by Dr. Arjun Sengupta has submitted its report to the Government. The recommendations made in the report relate to ownership issues and powers of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), audit of Government companies, vigilance management in CPSEs, etc. The recommendations of the Group are under examination.

Strategic Reserve Facility for Crude Oil

*574. SHRI RUPCHAND MURMU:

SHRIMATI MANORAMA MADHAVRAJ:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has any plan to set up strategic reserve facility for crude oil in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the locations identified for the purpose;

(c) the funds allocated for the purpose; and

(d) the time by which it is likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government have approved the building of Strategic Crude Oil Reserves of 5 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) at Mangalore (1.5 MMT), Vizag (1.0 MMT) and Mangalore or nearby location (2.5 MMT). It is estimated that the capital investment for building strategic storage reserves at Mangalore (1.5 MMTPA) and Vizag (1 MMTPA) will be approximately Rs. 1360 crores at June, 2004 prices. Additionally, the cost of filling the strategic crude oil storage would be based on prevailing international prices of crude.

(c) A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) by the name of Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) has been incorporated on 16 June 2004 as a wholly owned subsidiary of IOCL with an initial investment of Rs. one crore.

(d) The construction time is expected to be around 48 months from the date of award of the work.

Permission to Foreign Airlines for Investment in Indian Carriers

*575. SHRIMATI MINATI SEN:

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission has recommended to allow foreign Airlines to invest in the Indian Carriers;

(b) if so, the details and facts thereof; and

(c) the decision of the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c): As per the existing policy for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), no direct or indirect equity participation by foreign airlines in domestic airlines is allowed. Tenth Five Year Plan recommended a review of this policy and opening up of the domestic airlines industry to foreign carriers, with a view to attracting new technology and management expertise. Government has not approved this recommendation.

Khosla Committee Report on Electrification of Track

*576. SHRI SUGRIB SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways has examined the Khosla Committee report on electrification of track;

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations on which the Railways has taken action so far; and

(c) the time by which the remaining recommendations of the Committee will be implemented by the Government?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Out of 11 recommendations made by the Committee, 7 recommendations have been accepted, 2 recommendations have been partly accepted whereas 2 recommendations have not been accepted as detailed under:

Recommendations accepted:

- (i) Consideration of break even level of traffic and internal rate of return.
- (ii) Quality of statistics input for calculation of internal rate of return.
- (iii) Consideration of high horse power locomotives for the purpose of financial appraisal of Railway Electrification (RE) works.
- (iv) Cost of Colour Light Signals/ Optical Fibre Cable etc. to be part of Railway Electrification Cost.
- (v) Provision of Energy Meters in all the electric locos.
- (vi) Post implementation evaluation as per existing norms.
- (vii) Procedure for processing of Railway Electrification proposals.

Recommendations partly accepted:

- (i) Running of Diesel locomotives in Electrified Section.
- (ii) Integrated Traction Policy

Recommendations not accepted:

- (i) Review of on going projects.
- (ii) Consolidation of Existing Infrastructure before further extension of electrification.

**Concessional Fares of
Indian Airlines**

*577. SHRI B. MAHTAB: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether air fares of Indian Airlines to some sectors within the country is much higher than others which are far away in distance;

(b) If so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Indian Airlines offer a number of concessional fares on many sectors;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether Indian Airlines periodically reviews this keeping in view the commercial viability; and

(f) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) In view of the highly competitive market scenario, Indian Airlines took a decision in May, 2001 to introduce 'Flexi Fare Policy' whereby the level of fare increase/ decrease varies from sector to sector and season to season, depending upon various market factors like seasonality, strength of Indian Airlines vis-a-vis competitors, supply-demand equation etc. At present, fares are driven by these market forces and not based on sectoral distances.

(c) and (d) Indian Airlines offers, besides the normal sectors fares, 'Promotional Fares' on specified sectors from time to time. Various types of such fares are as under:-

- (i) **Lean sector Promotional fares:-** Lean sector Promotional fares are available on specified sectors in economy class. These are applicable on one way or return journeys.
- (ii) **Excursion Fares:-** Excursion fares are available on specified sectors in economy class. Only Round trip journey permitted under these fares.
- (iii) **Through Fares:-** Through Fares are applicable to facilitate travel of passenger where direct connections are not available under Through Fares travel at the intermediate point may or may not be permitted. Travel permitted on Economy class.
- (iv) **Round Trip Fares:-** Round trip fares are offered on specified sectors only. One way journey is not permitted. Travel is permitted in economy class.
- (v) **Fly Select Fares:-** Fly select fares have been introduced on select sectors/ flights. Seats are available on a first come first serve basis.
- (vi) **APEX Fares:-** APEX Fares, an Advance Purchase Scheme, had been introduced with effect from August, 2002 on select domestic sectors in economy class.

(vii) **Positioning Flight Fares:-** Positioning Flight Fares effective 1st April, 2004 fares on certain select sectors have been brought down to the level of almost AC chair fares. These fares are available on 24 sectors of the domestic leg of international flights.

(viii) **Permanent discounts offered by Indian Airlines:-** On fulfillment of certain conditions, members of Indian Armed Forces, personnel of General Reserve Engineering Force, war disabled persons, war widows, ex-Armed Force personnel, Para Military Forces, police personnel having received Presidents Police Medal for gallantry, civilians having received gallantry awards, students, senior citizens, blind persons, cancer patient, locomotor disability, persons invalid on stretcher, sports persons participating in National Sports Events and Arjuna Awardees are offered discounts of varying percentage.

(e) and (f) In the present scenario of competitiveness, fares are driven by market forces. Indian Airlines reviews the fares and adjusts them to meet market requirements.

Revamping of Air Services

*578. SHRI BADIGA RAMAKRISHNA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has set up a Committee for revamping of air services;

(b) if so, the details and objectives thereof;

(c) the time by which the Committee is likely to submit its report; and

(d) the steps likely to be taken to ease the air traffic

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) With a view to reducing congestion and increasing the number of aircraft movements per hour, the Government has constituted a committee on 29.3.2005 under the Chairmanship of Shri K. Roy Paul, former Secretary (Civil Aviation) to study the Air Traffic Services (ATS) Management System, Capacity problem at airports and safety aspect of air traffic management and to submit its report within three months with short term and long term recommendations.

Hike in Steel Prices Used in Railway

*579. SHRI JASHUBHAI DHANABHAI BARAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to refer to reply given to Unstarred Question No.4291 dated August 26, 2004

regarding Hike in Prices of Steel used in Railway and state:

(a) the details of recommendations made by the Committee constituted to study the issue of abnormal hike in the price of steel;

(b) whether the Government has examined the recommendations made by the Committee;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the follow-up action taken by the Government on its implementation; and

(e) if not, the reasons for delay in examination of the recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) to (e) The Committee constituted to study the abnormal hike in prices of steel has recommended that the contractor may be compensated in the works contract against the steep hike in steel prices, where steel forms a component more than 15% of the value of the work and where price variation clause exists. In case of works contract where price variation clause does not exist, there was no unanimous recommendation, four members of the committee recommended for providing compensation while the other two members did not agree to provide any relief. In the case of stores supply contracts, the committee was unanimous in their recommendation for not giving any compensation for contracts having price variation clause and for not agreeing to incorporate price variation clause in the current fixed price contracts, which are under execution. The Committee also recommended that in future contracts, price variation clause in the tender conditions may be suitably modified to incorporate variations in prices of steel and cement with respect to Wholesale Price Index of respective sub-groups. The recommendations of the Committee were examined and it was decided that the same principles should operate for works contract also as for stores contracts and since no relief is being given in case of stores supply contracts, there is no reason for adopting a different procedure for compensating the contractor in works contract.

Open-Sky Agreements with Foreign Aviation Companies

*580. SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY:

SHRI NIKHIL KUMAR:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to enter into open-sky agreements with several foreign aviation companies;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether open sky agreement with such foreign aviation companies would ease travel between the countries and generate outsource jobs; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Bilateral Air Services Agreements, which specify the traffic rights for operation of international air services, are entered into between the Governments and not with aviation companies. Government does not propose to enter into any Open-sky Agreement with foreign Governments presently. However, a liberalized Air Services Agreement based on open sky principles has recently been concluded with USA.

(c) and (d) The augmentation of capacity on international sectors will ease travel between countries and is expected to provide a significant boost to tourism, trade and commerce generating additional employment opportunities in these sectors.

House Rent Allowance to Employees of Ammunition Depot, Panagarh

5995. SHRI SUNIL KHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the employees of Air Force station, Panagarh are getting house allowance at the rates applicable to Durgapur city;

(b) if so, whether the civilian employees of Ammunition Depot, Panagarh are not getting house rent allowance at par with the employees of Air Force station, Panagarh;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government is considering to grant house rent allowance to the civilian employees of Ammunition Depot, Panagarh at par with that of Air Force station, Panagarh; and

(e) if so, when a decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Civilian Employees of Ammunition depot Panagarh are not getting House Rent Allowance at par with the employees of Air Force Station, Panagarh, because the location of Ammunition Depot, Panagarh, does not fulfill the conditions laid down by the Government in this regard.

(d) and (e) In view of (b) and (c) above, the question does not arise.

[Translation]

Smuggling of Idols

5996. SHRI BHUPENDRA SINH SOLANKI:

SHRI MAHESH KANODIA:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether smuggling of rare idols from the country is on the increase;

(b) if so, whether the Government proposes to take steps to check these incidents; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) The information received does not indicate any notable increase in the smuggling of rare idols from the country.

(b) The Customs Department maintains strict vigil to curb smuggling. The measures include preventive checks, nakabandi, collection of intelligence and night patrolling in association with Police and Directorate of Revenue Intelligence. Alert notices and other related information on smuggling of idols received at the headquarters, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and other agencies are circulated to all field units for keeping strict vigil.

(c) The Customs Department has confiscated 47 objects in 11 cases on smuggling of idols during the last three years. Details are enclosed as statement.

Statement

The Number of Cases and Objects Seized by Customs

S. No.	Name of Custom Office	Year 2002-03		Year 2003-04		Year 2004-05	
		No. of cases	No. of idols seized	No. of cases	No. of idols seized	No. of cases	No. of idols seized
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Chief Commissioner Patna	-	-	1	1	-	-
2.	Chief Commissioner Kolkata	-	-	2	6	3	3

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3.	Chief Commissioner Hyderabad	-	-	-	-	1	5
4.	Chief Commissioner New Delhi	-	-	-	-	1	1
5.	Chief Commissioner Mumbai Zone	-	-	-	-	1	1
6.	Chief Commissioner Preventive, Delhi	1	28	1	2	-	-
Total		1	28	4	9	6	10

Criteria for Allotment of Gas Agencies

5997. SHRI HARIKEWAL PRASAD:

SHRI ILYAS AZMI:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria laid down by the Government in regard to selection of places and dealers for allotment of gas agencies;

(b) the details regarding places identified in U.P. for allotment of new gas agencies so far; and

(c) the location-wise details regarding gas agencies likely to be sanctioned during the current financial year alongwith the number of agencies out of them started functioning?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Government have given freedom to Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to set up LPG distributorships in accordance with their commercial assessment and locations are identified by them on the basis of available refill sale potential for sustaining an independent distributorship. The criteria and the procedure for selection of LPG distributorships are published by OMCs from time to time in various Newspapers at the time of advertisement/ selection.

(b) and (c) The identification of locations is a continuous process and OMCs conduct surveys as per their requirements. However, Government have advised OMCs to draw up Marketing Plans for covering semi-urban and rural areas. The details of locations identified for setting up LPG distributorships in Uttar Pradesh are available with Director (Marketing) of the OMCs concerned. The commissioning of LPG distributorships depends upon various factors such as identification of viable locations,

release of advertisements, conducting interviews and the ability of the candidate to secure land for godown, showroom etc. In view of these factors, any specific target for commissioning LPG distributorships during a particular year in any State has not been fixed.

Halt Station

5998. SHRI RAM SINGH KASWAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has received any memoranda from Member of Parliaments to make halt stations at Ghumand between Ratangarh and Maulisar and at Anandwasi between Sridungargarh and Benisar on Hemasar-Ratangarh-Sardarshehar line in Bikaner Division of North-West Railway;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) Representation was received for opening of halt stations at Ghumand and Anandwasi on Bikaner Division. The proposals were examined and not found financially justified.

[English]

Gauge Conversion of Rewari-Bikaner Rail Line

5999. SHRI KULDEEP BISHNOI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the survey for changing the Rewari-Loharu-Sikar-Bikaner meter gauge line into broad gauge had been completed long back;

(b) if so, the reasons for delay in starting work thereon; and

(c) the time by which gauge conversion work is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The survey covering gauge conversion of Rewari-Loharu-Sikar-Bikaner section was conducted in the past. The work of gauge conversion of Rewari-Loharu-Sadulpur-Hissar has already been taken up. Updating survey for gauge conversion of Loharu-Sikar-Churu-Ringas-Jaipur is in progress and updating survey for gauge conversion of Sadulpur-Churu-Bikaner has recently been completed. Further consideration would depend upon finalization of the results of the survey and availability of resources.

Introduction of Continental Cuisine in Trains

6000. SHRI DALPAT SINGH PARSTE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways is planning to introduce continental cuisine in trains to tickle the upperend traveller's palate; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard alongwith the changes proposed to be made in the food menu in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Continental Menu already exists for Rajdhani/Shatabdi trains. There is no specific proposal to introduce continental cuisine at present for upper class passengers in other Mail/Express trains.

(b) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Rejection of Certificates of Uttaranchal Primary Education Council

6001. SHRI BALESHWAR YADAV: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the certificates of Uttaranchal Primary Education Council submitted by the youths during recruitment in the armed forces were rejected by the Army recently;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government of Uttaranchal has drawn the attention of the Ministry of Defence in this regard; and

(d) if so, the action taken by the Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The minimum educational qualification for recruitment in the Soldier General Duty category in the Army, is class 10th pass with 45% marks. However, for the tehsils Didihat, Dharchula and Munsiri of Pithoragarh district, an 8th class pass certificate is accepted. Thus an individual hailing from tehsils other than Didihat, Dharchula and Munsiri of Pithoragarh district, would not be eligible for recruitment in the Army on production of an 8th class pass certificate issued by the Uttaranchal Primary Education Council.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

[English]

Flights from Hyderabad

6002. SHRI A. SAI PRATHAP: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is considering to increase the frequency of flights from Hyderabad to other destinations both domestic and international; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Subject to availability of suitable aircraft capacity and economic viability, Indian Airlines have plans to introduce (i) flights with wide bodied aircraft from Hyderabad to points in Saudi Arabia; (ii) one more A320 services per week between Hyderabad and Kuwait; and (iii) A 4th daily flight between Hyderabad and Delhi.

Air India at present has no plans to increase the frequency of its flights from Hyderabad to other destinations on both domestic as well as international sectors.

Assam Gas Cracker Project

6003. SHRI M. K. SUBBA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of Assam Gas Cracker Project;

(b) the escalation suffered by the project so far, indicating the original estimated cost thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to complete the project expeditiously?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL

GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) The proposal for Assam Gas Cracker Project has been submitted for consideration/approval of the Public Investment Board (PIB), Ministry of Finance.

(b) As against an estimated cost of about Rs.3600 crore in 1994, the present estimated cost of the project is about Rs.5300 crore on a constant price basis.

(c) Further steps for the implementation of the project will be taken after approval of the project.

[Translation]

Closure of Gas Agencies

6004. **SHRI BHANU PRATAP SINGH VERMA:** Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state the details of gas agencies closed down on account of irregularities committed by them during the last three years, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): The details of gas agencies closed down by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) on account of irregularities committed by them during the last three years, State-wise is as under:

Sl. No.	Name of State	Name of gas agency
1	2	3
1.	Andhra Pradesh	M/s. Aruna Gas Agencies
2.	Bihar	M/s. Sangeeta Indane
3.	Delhi	M/s. Elite Agency
4.	Delhi	M/s. Vee Vee Traders
5.	Delhi	M/s. Hitesh Enterprises
6.	Gujarat	M/s. Trishla Gas Agency
7.	Gujarat	M/s. Umiya Gas Service
8.	Gujarat	M/s. Gas Bar Agency
9.	Haryana	M/s. Kumar Indane
10.	Jammu and Kashmir	M/s. Aar Kay Gas Agency
11.	Maharashtra	M/s. Godawari Gas Agency
12.	Maharashtra	M/s. Gobind Gas Services
13.	Maharashtra	M/s. Shivganga Indane

1	2	3
14.	Maharashtra	M/s. Ballarshah Indane
15.	Punjab	M/s. Sirhind Gas
16.	Punjab	M/s. Netaji Gas Service
17.	Punjab	M/s. Star Gas Service
18.	Punjab	M/s. Ganga Gas Service
19.	Punjab	M/s. Guleri Gas
20.	Punjab	M/s. Home Gas Service
21.	Punjab	M/s. Rajpura Gas Service
22.	Punjab	M/s. Gupta Gas Service
23.	Punjab	M/s. Arun Gas Agency
24.	Tamil Nadu	M/s. S.S. Gas Company
25.	Tamil Nadu	M/s. Uma Gas Agencies

Disha Airport

6005. **SHRI HARISINH CHAVDA:** Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken any steps for using Disha Airport for commercial purpose;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The airport can be made operational once firm commitment is received from any airlines operator to operate scheduled services.

Introduction of Shuttle Trains

6006. **SHRI HANSRAJ G. AHIR:** Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the policy of the Government for introducing shuttle trains;

(b) the number of shuttle trains running presently in the country, State/zone-wise;

(c) whether the proposal for introducing shuttle trains from Gadchandur to Ballarshah and from Ghughus to Ballarshah has been received; and

(d) If so, the action taken or proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) All trains including shuttle trains are introduced subject to operational feasibility, availability of resources and traffic justification.

(b) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

NCC Document Vision-2010

6007. SHRI JAI PRAKASH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Cadet Corps has released its document vision-2010; and

(b) If so, the salient features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The document titled "Vision - 2010" released by the Director General National Cadet Corps (NCC) envisages to increase the scope of NCC activities with special emphasis on increasing the intake of students, especially girls; making institutional training more realistic; induction of new state of the art training equipment; enhanced participation in community development programmes and increased application of information technology.

Appointment of Labour Contractor

6008. SHRI ASHOK ARGAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has issued any guidelines for the oil companies which forbid the duration of appointment for labour contractor at Jubilee and COCO Retail outlets beyond a definite time span; and

(b) the total number of such Jubilee and COCO retail outlets where the contractors have been appointed for more than 6 months, 12 months and 18 months respectively alongwith the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) No, Sir. Government have not issued any such instructions recently. These decisions lie within the domain of the companies themselves. Normally, the tenure of labour contractor for running Jubilee Retail Outlet (JRO)/ Company-Owned-Company-Operated

(COCO) retail outlet is initially for a period of one year with renewal option for another year, based on performance. However, some oil marketing companies (OMCs) provide for a tenure of labour contractor for a initial period of two years, with renewal option by another year, in respect of JRO. The number and details of JROs and COCO retail outlets, where labour contractors have been in position for different periods of time, are available with the Director (Marketing) of the companies concerned.

Issue of Seasonal Tickets Through ATM

6009. SHRI ATIQ AHAMAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has started installing ATM on certain railway stations to issue seasonal tickets;

(b) If so, the details thereof alongwith name of stations where such facility is currently available; and

(c) the name of the Stations selected for provision of such facility during 2005-06?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) The facility of issuing season tickets through Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) has been provided at Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) station of Central Railway on trial basis. Further decision will be based on results of the trials.

[English]

Construction of Godhni-Kalmana Cord Line

6010. SHRI SUBODH MOHITE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal for construction of Godhni-Kalmana cord/by-pass line is pending with Railways for the last two years;

(b) If so, the present status of the proposal; and

(c) the time by which the proposal is likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The work has already been approved in the year 2004-05. Detailed estimate and plan are under approval. The work includes signing of the Memorandum

of Understanding (MoU) between Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB) and Railway for using the land of MSEB. MOU is under process.

Extension of Naupada-Gunapur Line

6011. SHRI GIRIDHAR GAMANG: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any survey for extension of Naupada-Gunapur rail line from Gunapur to Theruvali on Rayagada- Titlagarh section of East Coast zone was conducted during 1997-98;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) funds provided for the project during the year 2005-06; and

(d) the present status of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a): Yes, Sir.

(b) As per the survey report, 1997-98, the cost of extension of Naupada-Gunapur rail line beyond Gunapur up to Theruvali (76 Kms) was assessed as Rs. 124.16 crore at the then price level. The proposal could not be considered due to acute constraint of resources and heavy throw-forward of ongoing projects.

(c) and (d) An updating survey for this extension has been included in the Budget 2005-06.

Rakes for Transportation of Industrial Products

6012. SHRI MAHBOOB ZAHEDI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has reduced the allotment of rakes for transportation of industrial products in Eastern India;

(b) if so, whether the Government's decision has largely affected transportation of coal and iron;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether due to reduction in rakes, the vegetable farmers are also affected for transportation of their products to the Northern India, particularly Bihar and Uttar Pradesh; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (e) Do not arise.

[Translation]

Criteria for Attachment of Coaches in Trains

6013. SHRI PUNNU LAL MOHALE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of coaches of different classes/categories attached with mail/express trains alongwith percentage-wise criteria adopted in this regard;

(b) whether this criterion is being adopted while attaching coaches in trains; and

(c) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) Coaches are attached with Mail/Express trains keeping in view the traffic pattern, operational feasibility and availability of resources.

GAIL – BPCL Joint Venture for Supply of CNG

6014. SHRI BAPU HARI CHAURE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the GAIL (India) Ltd. has established joint venture with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. which will supply CNG in Kanpur; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. GAIL (India) Ltd., have established a joint venture named "CENTRAL U.P. GAS LIMITED" with M/s Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd., on 25.02.2005 for the supply of Piped Natural Gas (PNG) and CNG to the city of Kanpur.

Air Services for South East Region

6015. SHRIMATI NEETA PATERIYA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether adequate air services for South East India are not available;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government of Madhya Pradesh has sent any proposal to the Union Government for providing air services for South East Region; and

(d) If so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Adequate services exist.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

[English]

**Plan for Off-shore Excavation
in Poompuhar**

6016. SHRI K. C. PALANISAMY: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has any plan to conduct off-shore excavations in Poompuhar, an epic-fame ancient town around 250 km south of Chennai, Tamil Nadu;

(b) If so, the details thereof; and

(c) If not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (c) The Archaeological Survey of India has no plans to carry out any off shore excavations at Poompuhar (Kaveripattinam) at present.

[Translation]

Retail Outlets under Landlord Scheme

6017. DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of retail outlets commissioned in the country by the Public Sector Oil Companies under the landlord scheme since 2003 till date; and

(b) the number of the outlets out of these commissioned without advertisement?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) As per their guidelines for selection of retail outlet dealers, the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) have commissioned 3,416 retail outlets in the country under the land-owner category since 2003 till March 2005.

(b) Out of this, the OMCs commissioned 2,882 retail outlets without recourse to advertisements for the selection of dealers.

[English]

Recruitment in PSUs

6018. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) have stopped recruitment to non-executive cadre posts in their establishments and concentrating to recruit only technical and higher level posts;

(b) If so, the details and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the number of persons in the non-executive cadre posts recruited by the PSUs during each of the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (c) Recruitment to all below Board level posts in the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is done by Management of the respective CPSEs. No Information is centrally maintained in this regard.

**Setting up of Minority Commissions/
Advisory Committees**

6019. SHRIMATI JAYABEN B. THAKKAR: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) had decided to set up Minority Commissions/Advisory Committees in States;

(b) If so, the details thereof and the name of States who have adhered to and formed Minority Commission/Advisory Groups in their respective States;

(c) the name of States not accepted the above suggestion/proposal of forming Minority Commissions/Advisory Groups in their States and the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken/to be taken by the NCM in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI

SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN: (a) to (c) The Government of India, based upon the recommendation made by the National Commission of Minorities in its Annual Report for the Year 1996-97 advised the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations on 30th May, 2003 to set up the State Level Minority Commissions. The State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal have set up the State Minorities Commissions. The remaining States have not set up State commissions.

(d) The matter of setting up State Minorities Commissions falls within the jurisdiction of the State Governments. The National Commission for Minorities, however, is persistently following up the matter with the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations.

[Translation]

Petroleum and Natural Gas Appellate Tribunal

6020. SHRIMATI KIRAN MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has decided to set up Petroleum and Natural Gas Appellate Tribunal;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the main objectives for setting up of said Tribunal; and
- (d) the modus operandi and composition of the above Tribunal?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Government is proposing to set up a Petroleum and Natural Gas Appellate Tribunal to hear appeals against the orders and decisions of the proposed Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board. The proposal is under consideration and, when finalised, the details will be included in the Bill to be introduced in Parliament.

[English]

Opening of an AIR Centre at Soro in Orissa

6021. SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that the building for the opening of an AIR Centre at Soro in Orissa has been already constructed since long and lying unutilised;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has any plan to commission this AIR Centre;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the time by which it is likely to be commissioned?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (e) All India Radio, Soro in Orissa is technically ready since 2001-02 for commissioning. There are a number of AIR projects, spread over in other parts of the country, which could not be commissioned for want of adequate manpower. While in some cases, commissioning has been resorted to through temporary readjustment, this has not been found feasible, as a permanent measure. Efforts are on for expediting the sanction of adequate staff. No precise time-limit can be indicated at this juncture.

[Translation]

Latur-Kuruvadi Rail Project

6022. SHRIMATI RUPATAI D. PATIL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the estimated cost of the rail project from Latur to Kuruvadi;
- (b) the funds allocated for the said project during the current financial year;
- (c) the present status of the project; and
- (d) the time by which the project is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) The likely cost of Miraj-Latur gauge conversion project (374 kms) is Rs.515.57 crore.

(b) An amount of Rs.35 crore has been provided for the entire project during 2005-06.

(c) The work is being progressed in phases. Kurduwadi to Pandharpur (52 km) and Latur-Latur Road (33 km) have been completed. Earthwork and bridges are in progress in Kurduwadi-Latur section. Ballast in this

stretch is being provided by State Government under "Employment Guarantee Scheme". Work has also been taken up between Miraj-Pandharpur.

(d) The project is being progressed as per availability of resources. Completion date of the project would depend upon completion of ballast supply by the State Government.

Assistance provided by Maulana Azad Education Foundation

6023. SHRI ILYAS AZMI: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of meetings of Maulana Azad Education Foundation held during the last one year, till date;

(b) the reasons for not convening the meeting of the Foundation for such a long period; and

(c) the names of institutions which were provided assistance by the foundation during the said period and the quantum of the said assistance, institution-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) and (b) Three meetings of the General Body and one meeting of Governing Body of Maulana Azad Education Foundation were held during the financial year 2004-05.

(c) A Statement indicating the Institution-wise grants released under the Educational Scheme by Maulana Azad Education Foundation during the year 2004-05 is enclosed.

Statement

Grants released by Maulana Azad Education Foundation under the Educational Schemes to various Institutions during the year 2004-05

S.No.	Name of the NGO	Amount Sanctioned (in Rupees)
1	2	3
Andhra Pradesh		
1.	Muslim Educational & Cultural Organisation, Hyderabad.	15,00,000/-
2.	Rizwan Education Society, Hyderabad	2,50,000/-
3.	Jamiatul Mominath, Hyderabad	9,00,000/-
4.	St. Suleman Educational Society, Hyderabad	10,80,000/-
5.	Al-Macca Educational Society, Mehboobnagar	23,25,000/-
6.	Dazzling Educational Society, Hyderabad	20,00,000/-
Bihaar		
7.	Shafi Muslim High School, Darbhanga	13,50,000/-
Delhi		
8.	Heera Education Trust, New Delhi	3,00,000/-
Goa		
9.	Anjuman Islahul Muslimeen, Margoa	26,00,000/-
10.	Anjuman Touheed Muslimin, Chimbhel	2,00,000/-
Gujarat		
11.	Hussainya Nagar Kelwani Mandal, Bharuch	10,00,000/-

1	2	3
12.	Mamba-UI-Uloom, Dolka, Ahmedabad	14,00,000/-
13.	Anjuman Education Trust, Balasinor, Kheda	15,00,000/-
14.	Madarsa Jameah Rehmaniya Arbiyah Islamiya, Distt. Godhra	9,00,000/-
15.	The Valan Educational & Welfare Society, Distt. Vadodara	9,00,000/-
16.	Ankleshwar Taluka Brotherhood Trust, Distt. Bharuch	12,00,000/-
17.	Anjuman Falah Daren, Distt. Banaskantha	5,00,000/-
	Haryana	
18.	Al-Qasim Educational Society, Distt. Gurgaon	3,80,000/-
19.	Mohmmadiya Education Society, Sakras, Distt. Gurgaon	10,00,000/-
	Jammu and Kashmir	
20.	Keh Kashan Public School, Handwara	10,00,000/-
21.	Shams Memorial Islamic Educational Institute, Budgam.	10,00,000/-
22.	HELP, Srinagar	10,00,000/-
23.	Society for Promotion of Culture & Education, Srinagar	30,00,000/-
	Karnataka	
24.	Khidmat UI Musleem, Bellary	30,00,000/-
25.	Allama Iqbal Educational Society, Distt. Bidar	20,00,000/-
26.	Al-Siraj Educational Society, Distt. Bidar	12,00,000/-
	Kerala	
27.	Malik Bin Deenar Islamic Complex Committee, Distt. Trissur	14,00,000/-
28.	Arafa Charitable Trust, Distt. Ernakulam	22,75,000/-
29.	Maswalihu Ssuniya Trust, Moloor, Distt. Palakkad.	15,00,000/-
30.	Alpha Charitable Trust, Distt. Palakkad	7,95,000/-
	Madhya Pradesh	
31.	Bright Star Muslim Association, Dewas	25,80,000/-
32.	Maulana Azad Educational Technical & Vocational Society, Indore	15,00,000/-
33.	National Muslim Education Society, Bhopal	2,00,000/-
	Maharashtra	
34.	Bazme -e-Talim, Mahsala, Raigad	7,95,000/-

1	2	3
35.	Dondicha Education Society, Dhule	10,00,000/-
36.	Dr. Allama Iqbal Education Society, Distt. Yavatmal	6,60,000/-
37.	Anjuman-e-Waseel-ul-Taleem, Raigad	13,50,000/-
38.	Mahila Bahuudeshiya Shikshan Sanstha, Yavatmal	6,25,000/-
39.	Anjuman-e-Ishaat Taleem, Dhule	8,00,000/-
40.	Late Dwarkabhai Somaji Kamble Prathisthan, Nanded	1,25,000/-
41.	Maulana Azad Education Society, Amravati	6,75,000/-
42.	Panvel Education Society, Panvel	30,00,000/-
43.	Awami Welfare Association, Mumbai	5,00,000/-
44.	Al-Hira Educational & Welfare Society, Aurangabad	10,00,000/-
45.	Arbi Urdu Marathi Education Society, Miraj	21,00,000/-
46.	Kokan Urdu Education Society, Distt. Thane	18,90,000/-
47.	Mehboob Education Trust, Raigad	10,25,000/-
48.	Bazme Urdu Adab, Ratnagiri	15,00,000/-
49.	Hazarat Umar Farooque Education Society, Distt. Yavatmal	15,00,000/-
50.	Mahapolli Educational & Charitable Trust, Distt. Thane	12,50,000/-
51.	Halqa E Dawanik Education Society, Aurangabad	10,00,000/-
52.	Yateemkhana Madarsa Anjuman Khairul Islam Trust, Mumbai	30,00,000/-
53.	Habib Educational & Welfare Society, Kausa	1,78,500/-
54.	Ideal Education Society, Ratnagiri	20,00,000/-
55.	Chiplun Education Society, Ratnagiri	10,50,000/-
56.	Aisha Education Trust, Mumbai	5,00,000/-
57.	Sarovar Shikshan Mandal, Sangli	20,00,000/-
58.	Teachers Education Society, Buldana	16,20,000/-
59.	Juhu Iria Education Society, Mumbai	3,53,000/-
60.	Anjuman Dardman-E-Talim-o-Tarraqui, Raigad	5,00,000/-
	Orissa	
61.	Imarate Shariah Educational & Welfare Trust, Phulwari Sharif, Patna	12,30,000/-
62.	Madani Welfare Association, Bhubneshwar	10,00,000/-
63.	Madarsa Ahrafal Uloom Al Banat, Distt. Kendrapada	5,00,000/-

1	2	3
	Rajasthan	
64.	Darul Uloom Ahle Sunnat Faizane, Nagaur	9,50,000/-
65.	Mohmadiya Welfare Society, Tonk	10,00,000/-
66.	Khwaja Garib Nawaz Shiksha Samiti, Jaipur	13,00,000/-
67.	Islamic Educational Cultural & Welfare Society, Sikar	30,00,000/-
68.	Al-Huda Educational Society, Distt. Kota	5,00,000/-
	Tamil Nadu	
69.	Mariaaan Services Society, Trichy	40,000/-
70.	Muslim Kalvi Sangam, Pallapati	18,00,000/-
71.	Pettai Madurai M Dharma Paripalana Sangam, Madurai	4,50,000/-
72.	Muslim Educational & Welfare Society, Coimbtore	10,00,000/-
	Uttar Pradesh	
73.	Madarsa Gulshan-e-Baghdad, Balrampur	6,00,000/-
74.	Jafariya Islamia Educational Association, Ambedkar Nagar	4,50,000/-
75.	Jamia Islamia Maarifya Quran, Ujhari, Distt. J.P. Nagar	15,00,000/-
76.	Late. Fateh Mohd Educational Society, Maharajganj	7,50,000/-
77.	Convent Shiksha Samiti, Baduan	6,75,000/-
78.	Raeen Educational Society, Sitapur	12,00,000/-
79.	Islamia Fatmi Educational Society, Saharanpur	7,50,000/-
80.	Samta Vikas Samiti, J.P.Nagar	9,00,000/-
81.	National Educational Welfare Society, Rampur	9,00,000/-
82.	Ghayasiban Educational Welfare Society, Lucknow	10,00,000/-
83.	Faiz-aam Muslim Educational Society, Faizabad	15,00,000/-
84.	Dargah-e-Islami, Faizabad	19,50,000/-
85.	Talim Gah-e-Niswan, Mau	5,00,000/-
86.	The Ujjiyar Educational Institution Society, Basti	4,10,000/-
87.	M.Ahmed Husain Atta Husain Education Society, Balla	7,00,000/-
88.	Anjuman Taleem, Lucknow	16,23,000/-
89.	The Public Education & Welfare Society, Morabadad	12,00,000/-
90.	Shan Montessori & Girls Jr. High School Samiti, Moradabad	4,50,000/-
91.	Talim-o-Tarakki High School Society, Ghaziabad	15,00,000/-
92.	Alpsankhyak Talimi Markaz & Imdadi Samitt, Pratapgarh	9,00,000/-
93.	Fatima girls junior high school, J.P.Nagar	15,00,000/-
94.	Maulayee Education society, Moradabad	9,00,000/-
95.	Falah Education Trust, Distt. Mau	10,00,000/-

1	2	3
96.	The Muslim Welfare & Educational Society, Azamgarh	17,00,000/-
97.	Quami Taleemi Society, Sultanpur	15,00,000/-
98.	Azad Maktab Pathshala, Kannuj	5,00,000/-
99.	Bright Home Shiksha Samiti, Saharanpur	9,00,000/-
	West Bengal	
100.	Sheikhdighi High School, Murshidabad	21,50,000.00
101.	Prof. S.Nurul Hasan College, Farakka, Murshidabad	15,00,000/-
102.	Sathi Sangha, 24 Parganas	7,50,000/-
	Total	12,03,39,500/-

**Decline in Catering and
Bedroll Facilities**

6024. SHRI GANESH SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that the catering and bedroll facilities in the trains is declining day-by-day;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) the number of complaints regarding supply of dirty bed rolls in trains particularly in the trains between Delhi-Rewa, Hazrat Nizamuddin-Jabalpur and Rewa-Bhopal received during the last one year;

(d) the action taken against the officials and the supplier in this regard; and

(e) the corrective measures taken/to be taken to improve these facilities in trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir. The standard of catering and bedroll facilities in trains is satisfactory.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) Train-wise/route-wise figures of complaints are not maintained separately. However, some cases of unsatisfactory supply of bedrolls on trains do come to notice. In such cases, suitable action is taken by the railway administration to set the deficiencies right. With a view to supply good quality bedrolls to the passengers, regular checks are conducted and remedial action is taken wherever shortcomings are detected.

[English]

Demands of Rakes at Major Ports

6025. SHRI JUAL ORAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of rakes demanded by and supplied to various major ports during each of the last three years, port-wise;

(b) whether some ports have not been supplied required number of rakes; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) The port-wise position of rakes demanded and supplied during the last three years is shown as under:-

Ports	2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
	Demand	Loading	Demand	Loading	Demand	Loading
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chennai	1047	1047	1100	1100	1246	1246
Cochin	205	205	180	180	40	40
Tuticorin	126	126	120	120	167	167
Mangalore	27	27	54	54	84	84

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Haldia	2544	2540	2352	2347	2487	2495
Paradip	693	676	1028	1005	1065	1088
Vizag	3722	3716	3929	3919	4333	4329
Mormugao	756	756	762	762	948	948
Kandla	161	154	124	124	177	167
Mundra	153.5	153.5	403	403	1251	1239
Mumbai	69	69	32	32	113	112
Jawahar Lal Nehru Port Trust	3736	3736	4092	4092	3984	3984
Kolkata	6	6	34	34	81	81

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

**Consultancy and Maintenance
Contracts by ONGC**

6026. SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether ONGC has set up a unit to leverage its knowledge and technological skills through consultancy and maintenance contracts;

(b) if so, the details of contracts signed during the last one year in this regard alongwith the names of countries;

(c) the future plans drawn to expand ONGC know-how throughout the world; and

(d) the foreign exchange likely to be earned therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Leveraging its best experience and rich technical competence in Exploration and Production of hydrocarbons, ONGC has been extending Training, Consultancy and Services to many countries. ONGC has signed contracts with M/s BAPEX, Bangladesh for rig repair jobs; M/s ADCO, Abu Dhabi for advanced drilling technology; M/s GNPOC, Sudan for carrying out geochemical surveys, analysis and data interpretation and training; and with M/s NIOC, Iran for training of personnel in exploration and drilling activities

(c) and (d) In order to benefit from emerging overseas

business opportunities in the hydrocarbons sector, ONGC has been exploring the possibility of transferring technical know-how, with a special focus on West Asia, Africa and South East Asia. The following business opportunities are being pursued by ONGC in this regard:-

1. Well Control Training in Bangladesh.
2. Water Shutoff jobs & Profile correction for PDO, Oman.
3. Research & Development (R&D) Co-operation Agreement with SQ University, Muscat, Oman.
4. R&D for heavy Oil recovery in Suriname.

As the detailed scope of work and terms and conditions of the cooperation are still being negotiated, it is not possible at this stage to quantify the likely foreign exchange earnings from these ventures.

Entry Fee for Viewing Taj during Night

6027. SHRI ANIRUDH PRASAD ALIAS SADHU YADAV:

SHRIMATI NIVEDITA MANE:

SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a considerable decrease in number of people visiting Taj Mahal during night;

(b) if so, the details alongwith the reasons therefor;

(c) whether there is any proposal to reduce the entry fee for viewing Taj during night; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) The Supreme Court of India had permitted night viewing of Taj Mahal in November, 2004. The number of visitors since then is statement enclosed.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. The rate of entry fee for night viewing of Taj Mahal is as follows:

Indian	-	Rs.510/- per head
Others	-	Rs.750/- per head
Children (from 03-15 years)	-	Rs.500/- per head

Statement

Number of Visitors for Night Viewing of Taj Mahal from November, 2004 to April, 2005

Month & Year	Adults		Child (Indian+ Foreigner)	Total Numbers of visitors for night viewing of Taj Mahal
	Indian	Foreigner		
November, 2004	433	168	47	648
December, 2004	43	174	134	739
Jan., 2005	276	351	21	648
Feb., 2005	187	385	20	592
March, 2005	324	211	57	592
April, 2005	293	54	59	406

Sea-Bird Project

6028. SHRI M. P. VEERENDRA KUMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether first phase of the Project Sea-Bird has been recently inaugurated;

(b) if so, the total expenditure incurred on the project;

(c) whether there is any cost escalation due to delay in its completion; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Total expenditure incurred on the Project till 31st March 2005 is Rs. 1820.80 crores.

(c) and (d) The Government has approved the revised project cost of Rs. 2459.20 crores in September, 2003. The approval stipulates completion of the project by 2005.

[Translation]

Development of Backward Villages as Model Villages by ONGC

6029. SHRI MITRASEN YADAV: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Oil and Natural Gas Corporation has formulated any scheme to develop certain backward villages as model villages; and

(b) if so, the total number of villages likely to be included under the said scheme, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) ONGC have initiated a project- "ONGC-PURA" - (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas), based on the vision of the Hon'ble President of India to bridge the rural-urban gap through achieving balanced socio-economic development after identifying rural clusters with growth potential.

(b) ONGC have launched the first ONGC-PURA at village Maichara in Belonia District of Tripura State. On its successful completion, similar project would be taken up in States where ONGC produces Oil and Gas.

Occupation of Private Land

6030. SHRI KIREN RIJJU: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Armed Forces have occupied private land in different parts of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) the reasons for occupying the private land; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to regularise such occupation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir. Armed Forces have occupied some private land in different parts of the country.

(b) The details of private land occupied by Armed Forces are given in the attached statement.

(c) The land has been occupied by the Armed Forces to meet the minimum inescapable operational requirement which is essential for carrying out its task effectively.

(d) The action for regularization of such occupation is being done jointly by the Defence Authorities and State Government Officials in consultation with the affected parties.

Statement

Name of the State	Hired Private Land (in acres)	Private land occupied The occupation is still to be regularized (in acres)	Requisitioned Private Land (in acres)
Punjab	257.90	2.92	-
Haryana	0.32	NII	-
Himachal Pradesh	58.12	NII	-
Rajasthan	909.02	NII	-
Karnataka	559.80	NII	-
Tamil Nadu	90.55	1.035	-
Andhra Pradesh	259.80	0.045	-
Maharashtra	141.34	Nil	-
Gujarat	NII	61.57	-
Madhya Pradesh	48.90	Nil	-
Uttaranchal	110.28	88.34	-
Bihar	6.65	4.56	-
Jharkhand	231.51	NII	-
Sikkim	1118.70	23.28	-
Assam	1073.88	0.41	-
Arunachal Pradesh	409.96	982.80	-
Nagaland	1022.06	NII	-
Tripura	15.13	NII	-
Mizoram	211.03	NII	-
West Bengal	404.90	3.43	2532.06 acres under requisition
Jammu and Kashmir	2001.215	3679.11	23925.87 acres under process of hiring/requisition

Programme and Advertising Codes

6031. SHRI IQBAL AHMED SARADGI:

SHRI RAYAPATI SAMBASIVARAO:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether any Programme and Advertising

Codes have been laid for TV Channels and Radio Broadcast;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) the steps taken by the Government to check violation of the Programme and Advertising Codes;

(d) whether the Government has decided to

transfer the Central Monitoring Services from Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to the National Technical Research Organisation; and

(e) If so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (c) Programmes and advertisements over AIR and DD are governed by their own internal Broadcast Code and Code for Commercial Advertising Doordarshan & AIR strictly adhere to their Codes.

As regards private TV channels, programmes and advertisements of all satellite TV Channels, transmitted/retransmitted through the cable network are required to adhere the Programme and Advertising Code prescribed under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and rules framed thereunder. Action for violations of these Codes can be taken by any authorized officer i.e. SDM, DM or Commissioner of Police or any other Officer notified in the official Gazette by the Central Government or State Government. As regards private FM broadcasts, they are required to adhere to the All India Radio Codes. Action is taken against TV Channels for violating the Codes from time to time.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. Keeping in view the specialized monitoring requirements of Government, it was decided to transfer Central Monitoring Services from Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO). The transfer has already been affected w.e.f. 01.04.2005.

[Translation]

Reservations in PRIs

6032. SHRI BRAJESH PATHAK: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether 73rd Constitutional Amendment has made reservations of SCs/STs mandatory in Panchayati Raj Institutions;

(b) whether Panchayati Raj Act passed by the Parliament in 1996 was enforced in scheduled areas and the States were to enact requisite legislation within a year in this respect;

(c) if so, the names of States/UTs which have passed the requisite legislation;

(d) the States/UTs which did not enact the legislation and the reasons therefor; and

(e) the directives issued by the Union Government to the State Governments/UTs which have not enacted the legislation?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) to (e) The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 was passed by the Parliament in 1996 and the provisions of the 73rd Amendment with some modifications have been extended to the tribal areas under Schedule V in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan.

All States where PESA, 1996 is applicable have amended their Panchayati Raj legislation as provided for in the Central Act. However, many other laws which have a bearing on implementation of PESA have not been amended. Consequently, issues such as access to natural resources, e.g. the definition and right over Minor Forest Product, remain unresolved. In general, the objectives of PESA have not so far been adequately realized in States with large tribal populations. In the third Round Table of Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj held at Raipur on 23-24 September, 2004 issues relating to the implementation of PESA were discussed. Ministers of Panchayati Raj agreed to recommend to their respective governments, for joint acceptance by the Centre and the States, action points agreed to during the meeting. A copy of the recommendations of the meeting is enclosed as statement.

Statement

Third Round Table of Ministries In-Charge of Panchayati Raj Raipur, 23-24 September, 2004

Ministers in-charge of Panchayati Raj, and their representatives, bearing in mind the spirit of cooperative federalism which must inform the effective implementation of Panchayati Raj as set out in Part IX of the Constitution of India and related provisions, agreed to recommend to their respective Governments, for joint acceptance by the Centre and the States, the following points of action:

I. The Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)

- (i) The need to consult the tribal communities and their elected representatives in evolving criteria for the constitution of Village Panchayats and Gram Sabhas in Schedule V Areas, to ensure that tribal communities, on the basis of ethnic identities, are constituted into different Gram Sabhas even within a Gram Panchayat area.

(ii) The need to take steps to implement in a time-bound framework the provisions of PESA in respect of the rights of the Gram Sabhas in Schedule V Areas:

- to identify the beneficiaries of plans, programmes and projects undertaken for economic development and social justice;
- to grant approval to plans/programmes/projects for local development formulated by Village Panchayats;
- to authorize the issue of Certificates of Utilization of Funds for plans, programmes and projects undertaken by Village Panchayats.

(iii) The need to empower Gram Sabhas and Panchayats in Schedule V Areas:

- to safeguard community ownership of land and its resources and thus ensure that tribal land is not alienated;
- to ensure that they are necessarily consulted before any land is acquired for any purpose.
- to ensure that their right to ownership of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is assured; that they can plan and manage minor water-bodies; and control and regulate how minor minerals are extracted, used and marketed.

(iv) To undertake wider consultation with other Government departments in order that the provisions of other legislation not compatible with the provisions of PESA are harmonized with the aims and objectives of PESA.

II. Reservations for Women

- (i) It is clear that women have been able to enlarge their representation beyond the minimum 33½% prescribed by the Constitution. In Karnataka, 45% of the elected offices are occupied by women and in Uttar Pradesh, 54% of the Zilla Panchayats Presidents are women. Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, 36% seats of chairpersons of Gram Panchayats are occupied by women.
- (ii) In promoting larger social objectives through PRIs, States may be sensitized to issues of gender empowerment so that the unintended consequences of such policies is not to diminish the role of women in Panchayat Raj.

(iii) The Constitution does provide for the rotation of seats reserved for women but does not prescribe the number of terms for which seats may be reserved before rotation. Seats may be reserved for one term or two terms or more depending upon the provisions made by the State Legislature in the State Law. There are different practices being adopted in the different States and there are different practices under contemplation in several States. This being so, the option to reserve seats for more than one-term is open but it is for the State Legislature to decide the number of terms for which seats will remain reserved.

(iv) The empowerment of women through reservations in the panchayats is a necessary first step but needs to be reinforced by a number of other measures such as:

- (a) the provision of Women Component Plans in the budgets of the PRIs;
- (b) linkages with Self Help Groups (SHGs);
- (c) adequate training and capacity building;
- (d) encouragement to political parties to put up women candidates;
- (e) the opportunity to women to serve a full term when they are elected to posts in the PR system;
- (f) Mahila Sabhas (or equivalent) to facilitate women's concerns and priorities being raised in meetings of Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas (or equivalent sub-Gram Sabha forums);
- (g) separate quorum for women's participation in Gram Sabhas and Sub-Gram Sabha forums.

(v) Reservations to the post of chairperson in the PR system has been challenged in the courts of law, calling for an appropriate defence of the provisions in the court and jurisprudential clarifications of the issues involved.

III. Reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

Article 243D provides that seats for SC/ST be reserved on the basis of the SC/ST population in each Panchayat area. While by and large the States were

faithfully following the provisions of Article 243D, problems arise where the percentage of SC/ST population is very low. The Round Table demonstrated that the cross-State experience of States dealing with this problem was very useful. Such cross-State exchange of practices and experience may be encouraged.

[English]

Projects under Provision of Urban Facilities to Rural Areas Scheme

6033. SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Panchayats which have submitted projects under the Provision of Urban Facilities to Rural Areas Scheme, State-wise; and

(b) the present position of these projects?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) The Ministry of Rural Development have stated that under their scheme of Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA), District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) - and not the Panchayats - have been asked to submit detailed project reports on the identified clusters.

(b) The Ministry of Rural Development, in consultation with Planning Commission, have decided to initially launch a pilot phase for the implementation of the PURA Scheme. Under the pilot phase, 7 facilities, namely, power, road, transportation, health, education, water supply and marketing are envisaged to be provided in selected clusters. The pilot phase has been launched in 7 States, with one cluster in each State comprising 10-15 villages.

Scheme for Alcoholic De-addiction Centres

6034. SHRI PRAHLAD JOSHI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is considering to implement Centrally Sponsored Schemes for nation wide alcoholic de-addiction centres at the Gram Panchayat level;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which these schemes will be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) The Ministry of Social Justice &

Empowerment, who are administratively concerned with the subject have stated that they are not considering formulation or implementation of any Centrally Sponsored Scheme for nation-wide alcoholic de-addiction centres at the Gram Panchayat level.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Museum of Rare Artefacts

6035. SHRI G.V. HARSHA KUMAR: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) proposes to set up a museum of rare artefacts to attract the tourists and pilgrims visiting the ancient Lakhmandal temple in Mussoorie as reported in 'The Hindu' dated January 28, 2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the museum is likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) There is no such proposal to set up a museum in Mussoorie.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Remains of 'Lakshyagrih' of Mahabharat Era'

6036. SHRI SAJJAN KUMAR: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has received any information about the finding of the likely remains of the famous 'Lakshyagrih' of the Mahabharat era in Baghpat area of Uttar Pradesh;

(b) whether any instruction / directives have been issued to the Archaeological Survey of India to conduct a technical inspection of this area;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the progress made so far in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) A request has been received from District Magistrate, Baghpat, (Uttar Pradesh) to survey the legendary tunnel between Barnava and Baghpat associated with Lakshyagrih of Mahabharat fame.

(b) to (d) The matter is under examination in the Archaeological Survey of India.

[English]

Committee of Ministers on OBCs

6037. SHRI D. P. SAROJ:

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV:

SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has any plan to constitute a Committee of Ministers to supervise programmes being run by various ministries and departments for welfare of OBCs;

(b) if so, the details of aims, objectives and composition thereof;

(c) whether in spite of allocating large funds under various welfare schemes for OBCs desired results of the schemes has not been achieved so far;

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(e) whether the Government has any plan to start/launch awareness campaigns to ensure that OBCs avail benefits of these schemes;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether the Government also encourage State Governments to implement all existing schemes for empowerment of the OBC Community; and

(h) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (h) The budget provided for implementation of schemes for welfare of OBCs are yielding desired results. All State Governments/UT Administrations are advised from time to time to send proposals for central Assistance. Further conferences of Secretaries/ Commissioners of States/UTs dealing with the OBCs are also held to ensure their active participation in the implementation of programmes. Besides, National Backward Classes Finance &

Development Corporation (NBCFDC), also organizes awareness camps for the benefit of OBC Beneficiaries.

[Translation]

Aerodrome at Gochar

6038. SHRI SURENDRA PRAKASH GOYAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to establish an aerodrome at Gochar to make the Badrinath-Kedarnath Yatra comfortable keeping in view a large number of tourists in Uttaranchal;

(b) if so, whether any feasibility survey has been conducted; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) There is an airstrip at Gochar, which belongs to State Government of Uttaranchal. Pawan Hans Helicopters Ltd. is already operating schedule helicopter services to Badrinath and Kedarnath shrines. Due to non-commitment from any airlines operator to operate schedule services to/from Gochar, there is no plan to upgrade the existing airstrip into a regular aerodrome.

(b) and (c) However, on the request of State Government of Uttaranchal, a technical feasibility study was undertaken by Airports Authority of India (AAI) in July, 2004 and the inspection report alongwith remedial action was sent to the State Government for taking necessary action to make the existing airstrip suitable for commercial aircraft operation.

[English]

Dr. Ambedkar National Scholarship Scheme for Meritorious SC/ST Students

6039. SHRI MANSUKHBHAI D. VASAVA:

SHRI TUKARAM GANPATRAO RENGE
PATIL:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Dr. Ambedkar National Scholarship Scheme is being implemented to give scholarship to the meritorious students from SC/ST communities;

(b) if so, details of the scheme and the scholarships given to male and female students, separately, during each of the last three years State/UT-wise;

(c) whether the scheme is being extended to OBC and poor students also;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Details of the scheme are given in statement-I and the details of scholarships awarded to male & female students during 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 are given in statement-II enclosed.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) The main objective of the scheme implemented by Dr. Ambedkar Foundation is to give financial assistance to poor meritorious SC/ST students.

Statement-I

Details of the Scheme

Dr. Ambedkar National Scholarship Scheme for meritorious students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is implemented by Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, set up under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. The objective of the scheme is to recognize, promote and assist the meritorious students belonging to SCs and STs for pursuing higher studies. Family income of SCs and STs students form the all resources should not be more than Rs. One lakh in the preceding financial year. The scholarship is given to three students scoring highest marks in the regular class X level examination conducting by the Education Board/Council @ Rs.60,000/-, Rs.50,000 and Rs.40,000 respectively. These scholarships are separate for SCs and STs. In case none of the first three eligible students is girl, the girl student scoring the highest marks will get a special award @ Rs.40,000/-. Besides 250 scholarships at the rate of Rs.10,000/- each are given to SC/ST students securing next highest marks, after first, second and third position. Scholarship is given as one time grant.

Statement-II

Details of scholarships awarded to male & female students during 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04

Sl. No.	State/UT Board	2001-02				2002-03				2003-04**			
		SC		ST		SC		ST		SC		ST	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.	Bihar	14	03	02	01	13	02	01	01	-	-	-	-
2.	Uttar Pradesh	23	10	01	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Tripura	01	03	03	03	04	01	03	02	03	01	04	01
4.	Punjab	01	07	-	-	02	05	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Tamil Nadu	03	10	-	04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.	Pondicherry	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Karnataka	07	08	02	03	03**	10**	02**	03**	01	11	03	03
8.	Andhra Pradesh	27	09	08	03	13**	06**	08**	01**	-	-	-	-
9.	Mizoram	-	-	-	05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Goa	01	03	-	-	03	01	01	02	-	-	-	-
11.	West Bengal	21	01	07	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
12.	Madhya Pradesh	06	04	06	06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13.	Manipur	03	03	03	02	02	02	03	03	-	-	-	-
14.	Kerala	01	05	-	04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15.	Gujarat	06	-	05	04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16.	Himachal Pradesh	01	03	02	02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17.	Meghalaya	-	-	02	02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18.	Haryana	04	02	02	01	05	02	-	-	03	03	02	02
19.	Nagaland	-	02	02	03	02	01	03	02	-	01	02	03
20.	Orissa	06*	-	05*	01*	04	05	06	04	-	-	-	-
21.	Maharashtra	-	-	-	-	05	03	06	02	-	-	-	-
22.	Sikkim	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	-	-	01
23.	Chandigarh (UT)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	-	-	-
24.	Andaman and Nicobar (UT)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Total		126	73	50	46	56	38	33	20	09	16	11	11

* Scholarship given in 2002-03.

** To be distributed.

[Translation]

Life Span on Railway Engines

6040. PROF. CHANDER KUMAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the average life span of the railway engines put in use on various narrow gauge and broad gauge routes particularly that of the railway engine operating in Kangra Valley (Himachal Pradesh); and

(b) the replacement rate of the various engines in use at various narrow gauge and broad gauge routes particularly the engines being used in Himachal Pradesh alongwith Kangra Valley Express train?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) The codal life of broad gauge and narrow gauge locomotives working on Railways is between 30 & 36 years. However, average life span of narrow gauge diesel locomotives operating in Pathanakot-Joginder Nagar narrow gauge section is about 30 years.

(b) The locomotives are replaced on age cum condition basis.

[English]

Rail Connection upto Dholera Port

6041. SHRI VIKRAMBHAI ARJANBHAI MADAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is considering Rail connection upto Dholera Port in the Gujarat under the Build Own Lease and Transfer Scheme; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the time by which the work on the project is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Utilisation of Land After Exploration of Oil and Gas

6042. SHRI JIVABHAI A. PATEL:

SHRI V. K. THUMMAR:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the mode utilization of the land by the Government after exploration of oil and gas therefrom;

(b) whether the Government is contemplating to return the aforesaid land to the owners from who it acquired after exploring oil reserves; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Exploration companies acquire land for its exploration activities on either a permanent basis or temporary basis. The land acquired on a temporary basis is restored back to normal condition and returned to the land owner. Land acquired for a permanent basis is utilised for activities related to the production of oil and gas.

[English]

Security Clearance to Board Members of Jet Airways

6043. SHRI T.K. HAMZA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Jet Airways sought security clearance after inducting certain individuals in its Board of Directors;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether any investigation was conducted against the Jet Airways within the last three years; and

(d) if so, the details including status of the investigation and the action taken, if any, based on the investigation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. The Jet Airways sought security clearance after inducting certain individuals in its Board of Directors.

(b) The details of individuals inducted in the existing Board of Directors of Jet Airways and status of security clearance (which is accorded by Ministry of Home Affairs) is as under:-

S.No.	Name	Date of request	Status
1	2	3	5
1.	Mr. Charles A. Adams	13.11.2003	Security Cleared

1	2	3	5
2.	Mr. P.R.S. Oberoi	20.05.2004	-do-
3.	Mr. Aman Mehta	01.10.2004	-do-
4.	Dr. Vijay Kelkar	27.11.2004	-do-
5.	Mr. S.G. Pitroda	20.12.2004	Awaited

(c) and (d) No investigation has been conducted by Ministry of Civil Aviation against Jet Airways during the last three years.

[Translation]

Gas Linkage Committee

6044. SHRI SURAJ SINGH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the composition and functioning of the Gas Linkage Committee (G.L.C.);

(b) the number of applications received by the Gas Linkage Committee for allotment of gas during the last three years;

(c) the number of the applicants to whom gas was allotted during the said period;

(d) whether GAIL India Ltd. has supplied gas to some applicants directly during 2003 and 2004; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR) : (a) to (c) The Gas Linkage Committee (GLC) was constituted by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas in 1991 as an Inter-Ministerial Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary (P&NG) and having as members, representatives of the Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Power, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Ministry of Steel, etc. The GLC was set up to recommend to the Government the allocation of natural gas available under the Administered Price Mechanism (APM) and to review the progress of projects for the utilisation of natural gas. Subsequently, Government declared a New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) under which Exploration and Production (E&P) blocks are being awarded through a bidding process. Gas produced from these blocks is not covered under APM. The only available APM gas in the last 3-4 years is from isolated/marginal fields and some quantities in the K.G. and Cauvery Basins. The Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) have been authorized to invite applications for the allocation of this gas and submit their recommendations for the consideration of the GLC. During the years 2002-03 and 2003-

04, 137 applications were considered, out of which 57 customers were allocated gas. No meetings of GLC have been held in 2004-05.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. A few customers were supplied with small quantities of gas in 2003 & 2004 from the gas available from isolated fields in KG Basin and South Gujarat. These supplies were based Government directions for the early monetization of gas from isolated fields without awaiting GLC approval.

[English]

Kudumbasree Project on Women Empowerment

6045. SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the 'Kudumbasree' project of Kerala Government aimed at poverty alleviation and women empowerment has come to the notice of the Union Government;

(b) if so, whether the Union Government is considering to implement the said project throughout the country; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) As the aforementioned scheme is as State Government funded scheme, its implementation is restricted to the State of Kerala.

[Translation]

Retail Outlets by Mangalore Refinery

6046. SHRI TUFANI SAROJ: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd. has decided to set up retail outlets for sale of petroleum products;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of such retail outlets proposes to be set up during the current year alongwith locations thereof;

(d) whether the company has signed any agreement with Ashok-Leyland-Project-Services in this regards; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Government have granted authorization in February, 2004 to Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL) for setting up 500 Retail Outlets (ROs) in various parts of the country for marketing transportation fuels. However, no time limit has been given for setting up these ROs and hence specific targets have not been fixed for the ROs to be set up during the current year.

(d) and (e) MRPL have signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ashok-Leyland-Project-Services on 28 March 2005 for jointly promoting marketing infrastructure, including the development of ROs on a selective basis.

Financial Assistance for Maintenance of Monuments

6047. SHRI DEVIDAS PINGLE: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government provides financial assistance to the State Governments through centrally sponsored schemes for conservation of monuments;

(b) if so, the amount of financial assistance provided to the State Governments during each of the last three years, State-wise;

(c) whether the Government of Maharashtra has submitted any action plan to the Union Government for maintenance and conservation of protected monuments in Nasik district;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) Does not arise.

Coastal Karnataka Tour Scheme

6048. SHRI HARIBHAU RATHOD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways had launched Coastal Karnataka Tour Scheme;

(b) if so, the details and salient features thereof; and

(c) the profits likely to be earned by the railways therefrom annually?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It is a 5 days - 4 nights tour starting from Mumbai. The tour includes visits to popular tourist destinations like Yana, Jog Falls, Gokarna Temple, Murdeshwar Temple, Udupi etc. The tariff per person is Rs.6,000/- which includes all charges for rail travel, sightseeing of tourist spots, food, lodging etc.

(c) The package has been launched in December 2004 and is in its nascent stage. So far 50 tourists have travelled in this package. Railway gets Rs.2,375/- (which includes the railway ticket fare) per passenger out of the total package cost of Rs.6,000/- per passenger.

Conversion of Foundry into Ammunition Factory

6049. SHRI RAKESH SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether capacity of the Grey Iron Foundry, Jabalpur under the Ministry of Defence is being fully utilised;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government proposes to convert the said foundry into an ammunition factory; and

(d) if not, the plans of the Government for providing adequate work to this foundry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE):

(a) At present, Grey Iron Foundry, Jabalpur (GIF) has adequate workload for utilisation of installed capacity.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

[English]

Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti

6050. SHRI ABDUL RASHID SHAHEEN: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the contribution of Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti to propagate thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi during the last three years;

(b) whether any tangible work has been done by the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti to achieve the objectives during the said period;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the details of research work undertaken by this body on Mahatma's thoughts and philosophy during the said period?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti runs a number of regular programmes to propagate thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi to all segments of society. In addition, the following important projects/programmes have been redesigned in the last three years for specific target groups i.e. children, youth, women, jail inmates etc.:

- Srijan - Children and Youth Centre
- Sanmati - Gandhi Smriti Literature Centre
- Gandhi Smriti Mobile Library
- Sumna - Gandhi Smriti Art Gallery
- Swaraj - Gandhi Smriti Gramodyog Kendra
- Saksham - Gandhi Smriti Tihar Ashram Kendra
- Kasturba Gandhi Kendra in Manipur, Assam, Sikkim, Tripura etc.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. To spread key Gandhian values of peace, non-violence, communal and social harmony in society and with an idea to make youth leadership imbibe these values, a number of events have been organized with large participation of people from India and abroad. These included:

- (i) Global Convention on Peace and Non-violence;
- (ii) National Seminar on 'Rashtriya Andolan: Hindi aur Gandhi';

- (iii) Development Programme in Champaran and Northeastern States;
- (iv) Launching three-month certificate course on Gandhi and Contemporary World in collaboration with IGNOU;
- (v) Multi-media exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi.

(d) To bring forth a critical evaluation of Gandhi's theories and practices in the light of the contemporary realities, a series of 20 volumes titled 'Rediscovering Gandhi' has been planned for publication. A number of work-shops have been held and an outline and common guidelines have firmed up. Authors and general editors have also been identified.

[Translation]

Wheel Trolley System

6051. SHRI SANJAY DHOTRE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is contemplating to introduce Wheel Trolley System at some important Railway stations under the Railway modernization schemes; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

[English]

Hedging Mechanism in Oil Market

6052. SHRI K.J.S.P. REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether many nations in Asia including India do not have a hedging mechanism in the oil market;

(b) if so, whether the Government has discussed with other Asian countries in this regard to evolve a hedging mechanism; and

(c) if so, the details and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Asia has an active Over-the-Counter (OTC) market in Singapore, which offers different types of contract for oil price hedging. Companies of various Asian countries are free to use the OTC market, subject to the

regulations within their own country. Since September 2000, the Reserve Bank of India has allowed Indian oil companies having underlying exposure to oil price risk to hedge their risk using overseas market offering hedging contracts.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Modernisation of Railways

6053. SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any plan has been chalked out for modernisation of Railways;

(b) if so, the salient features of the plan and time by which the plan is likely to be implemented;

(c) if so, the funds earmarked for the purpose during each of the last three years; and

(d) the steps taken to implement the modernisation plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Integrated Railway Modernization Plan envisages improved overall performance, technological upgradation and efficiency to provide better, competitive and cost effective transport system. It entails 150 Kmph passenger trains on selected corridors, 100 Kmph freight trains on identified high-density routes, enhanced throughput by higher axle load operations, introduction of modern rolling stock, double stack container movement on identified routes and development of Roll-On- Roll-Off door-to-door services. Emphasis is also given to introduction of environment friendly toilets in passenger coaches, modernization of track, bridge, signaling, mechanical and electrical systems.

It is a 5-year Plan starting from 2005-06 to 2009-10.

(c) Since the Modernisation Plan is to be implemented from 2005-06 onwards, the question of allocation of funds for the last three years does not arise.

(d) The Integrated Railway Modernization Plan has been formulated identifying activities with definite time frame for implementation. Year-wise target along with allocation of funds have been made for each year in the Modernisation Plan.

**Vacation of Shops/ Counters
at Airports**

6054. SHRI ADHALRAO PATIL SHIVAJIRAO: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken a decision to vacate the shops/counters allotted to various PSUs at National/ International Airports; and

(b) if so, the details alongwith the reasons, therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Grants to States in Lump-Sum

6055. SHRI KRISHNA MURARI MOGHE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government proposes to provide the amount of grants-in-aid, being provided to the Voluntary Organisations/Non.-Governmental Organisations for the last several years, in lump-sum to the State Governments;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which it is likely to be implemented so that the proposals VOs/NGOs need not be forwarded to the Union Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

**Inclusion of Bhar/Rajbhar Caste
of UP in SC List**

6056. SHRI UMAKANT YADAV: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the issue of inclusion of Bhar/Rajbhar caste in Uttar Pradesh in the List of Scheduled Castes is under consideration of the Union Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for non-inclusion of the said caste in the above list so far; and

(d) the time by which the said caste is likely to be included in SC List?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) to (d) The proposal has been processed as peer approved modalities in consultation with the Registrar General of India, which did not favour it and therefore, the State Government has, been requested to justify their recommendation. No time frame can, however, be assigned for taking final decision, as the proposals are processed in consultation with various agencies and that any amendment in the list of Scheduled castes can be done only by an Act of Parliament, in view of Article 341 (2) of the Constitution.

[English]

**Railway Connectivity with
ICTT Project**

6057. SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways have received any proposal from the Government of Kerala regarding Railway connectivity from the International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT) project at Vallarpadam, Kochi to the major railway network;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the decision taken by the Railways thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Proposals have been received from Government of Kerala for providing rail connection to upcoming container terminal at Vallarpadam.

(c) The survey has been completed for line from Idappalli to Vallarpadam. Bankability report prepared by M/s Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd. has been examined and the proposal has been found to be unviable.

[Translation]

**Hand Over of Catering Work to
Multinational Companies**

6058. SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to hand over the work of catering to multinational companies;

(b) if so, the manner in which the vendors

employed with the Railways will be/ are proposed to be adjusted;

(c) whether the Government has fixed/ proposes to fix any norms for the said companies;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir. However, multinational companies incorporated in India are not prohibited from participating in the tender process for allotment of catering units

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) No guidelines are available in the Ministry to practise separate norms for multinational companies.

[English]

Development of Airport at Pondicherry

6059. PROF. M. RAMADASS: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has any proposal for development of Airport at Pondicherry;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) There is no firm commitment from any airlines to operate scheduled services through Pondicherry Airport.

Doubling of Midnapore-Kharagpur Rail Lines

6060. SHRI PRABODH PANDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any survey has been conducted to assess the feasibility of doubling the rail line between Midnapore and Kharagpur via Girimaidan under Kharagpur Division of South Eastern Railway;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the funds allocated for the project; and

(d) the time by which the construction work on the project is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Kharagpur to Midnapore is a double-line section except for two single-line patches, i.e., Kharagpur-Gokulpur and on Cossey river. An updating survey for doubling of this portion between Kharagpur and Midnapur via Girimaidan has been completed recently. As per the updated survey report, the cost of this doubling (6 Kms) has been assessed as Rs. 43.94 crore.

(c) and (d) The project is not yet approved.

Special Scheme for Air Service to Tourist Spots

6061. SHRI G. KARUNAKARA REDDY:

SHRI JASHUBHAI DHANABHAI BARAD:

SHRI ANANTA NAYAK:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government has formulated any special scheme for air service to tourist spots and pilgrimage destinations for the growth of Tourism Industry;

(b) if so, the concessions likely to be given to the tourist/pilgrims under this scheme;

(c) whether the Union Government is aware of the adverse effects on the tourism industry due to steep hike in air fares by the Ministry and the competition caused by the private sector;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) Any steep hike in air fares does have an impact on tourism inflow. However, after repeal of Air Corporation Act, 1953, domestic fares are not regulated by the Government. The airlines are free to charge air fares depending upon economic viability and commercial judgement.

[Translation]

**Opening of Retail Outlets/
Gas Agencies**

6062. SHRI JASWANT SINGH BISHNOI:

SHRI TAPIR GAO:

SHRI RANEN BARMAN:

SHRI V. K. THUMMAR:

SHRI M. ANJAN KUMAR YADAV:

SHRI KASHIRAM RANA:

SHRIMATI SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state the number of retail outlets and gas agencies proposed to be set up by Public Sector and Private Sector Oil Companies during 2005-2006, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): The public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs), viz., Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and IBP Co. Limited (IBP) tentatively plan to set up around 4,667 retail outlet (RO) dealerships and 907 LPG distributorships (gas agencies) (LPG) in different States/ Union Territories in the country during the year 2005-06. The OMC-wise position is as under:-

Proposed to be set up during 2005-06

	RO	LPG
IOCL	1,512	294
BPCL	1,735	178
HPCL	920	375
IBP	500	60
Total	4,667	907

As regards private sector oil companies, M/s Reliance Industries Limited, M/s Essar Oil Limited and M/s Shell India Marketing Pvt. Ltd. have been authorized to market transportation fuel and they propose to set up 5849, 1700 and 2000 retail outlets respectively. However, there is no fixed time-frame for setting up these retail outlets. Under the parallel marketing scheme, private oil companies may market imported LPG and are not required to take any authorization from Government for setting up LPG distributorships.

[English]

**Community Development
through Panchayats**

6063. SHRI P. S. GADHAVI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is contemplating to encourage community development through Panchayats in the States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has drawn up any plan or scheme for the development of Community Centres which can provide drinking water, health care services and free education to poor sections of the society; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) The Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution lists out 29 matters that may be devolved upon Panchayats by States, all of which have a bearing on holistic community development.

(b) Details of the functions devolved upon Panchayats by States are given in statement enclosed.

(c) and (d) The compendium of conclusions reached by consensus after seven Round Table meetings of the Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj comprehensively addresses issues relating to the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in holistic community development. The Central Finance Commission makes recommendations on the measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of the States to supplement the resources of the Panchayats on the basis of the recommendations of the State Finance Commission. The Twelfth Finance Commission, which has recently submitted its report to the Government, has recommended that from 2005-2010, the Consolidated Funds of States may be augmented by Rs. 20,000 crore so as to supplement the resources of Panchayats so that they are encouraged to take over assets relating to water supply and sanitation and utilize the grants for repairs, rejuvenation and O&M of these assets.

The Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana, a scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development, which is being implemented by Panchayats at the District, Block and Village levels is also aimed at the creation of durable community, social and economic infrastructure while principally providing additional wage employment and food security in rural areas.

Statement**Status of Devolution of Funds, Functions and Functionaries to Panchayat Raj Institutions**

Sl. No.	States/UTs	No. of Departments/subject Transferred to Panchayats with			
		Funds	Functions	Functionaries	
1	2	3	4	5	
1.	Karnataka	29	29	29	
2.	Kerala	26	26	26	
3.	Sikkim	24	24	24	
4.	Maharashtra	18	18	18	
5.	Andhra Pradesh	05	17	02	
6.	Arunachal Pradesh	-	-	-	Elections held recently. Yet to devolve 3Fs.
7.	Assam	-	29	-	
8.	Bihar	8	25	Only functional control	
9.	Jharkhand	-	-	-	Elections have not yet been held.
10.	Goa	6	6	-	
11.	Gujarat	15	15	15	
12.	Haryana	-	16	-	
13.	Himachal Pradesh	02	26 subjects	11	
14.	Madhya Pradesh	10	23	09	
15.	Chhattisgarh	10	29	09	
16.	Manipur	-	22	04	
17.	Orissa	09	25	21	
18.	Punjab	-	07	-	
19.	Rajasthan	18	29	18	
20.	Tamil Nadu	-	29	-	
21.	Tripura	-	12	-	
22.	Uttar Pradesh	04	12	06	
23.	Uttaranchal	-	11	11	
24.	West Bengal	12	29	12	
25.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	06	06	06	
26.	Chandigarh	-	-	-	
27.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	-	03	03	

1	2	3	4	5
28.	Daman and Diu	05	09	03
29.	NCT of Delhi	Panchayati Raj System is yet to be revived		
30.	Pondicherry	-	-	-
				Elections have not yet been held.
31.	Lakshadweep	-	06	-

The provisions of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 are not applicable to the States of J&K, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Airports for Accommodating A-380 Aircraft

6064. SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH DHINDSA:

SHRI M. RAJA MOHAN REDDY:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has identified some airports in the country for accommodating super jumbos A-380 aircraft; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Chhatrapati Shivaji International (CSI) Airport, Mumbai, Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, Delhi, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose International (NSCBI) Airport, Kolkata and Chennai Airport have been identified for accommodating Super Jumbos A-380 aircraft. Based on studies carried out by Airports Authority of India (AAI), two stands at IGI Airport, Delhi; three stands at CSI Airport, Mumbai and one each at Kolkata and Chennai airports are being planned.

Rail Over Bridges in Delhi

6065. SHRI ALOK KUMAR MEHTA:

SHRI SITA RAM YADAV:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to build 31 new rail overbridges to ease traffic chaos in Delhi;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether the Government has conducted any survey of constructing over bridges in other parts of the National Capital Region comprising of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana & Rajasthan; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) No, Sir. No such proposal has yet been received from the State Govt. However, there are 31 level crossings falling in Delhi having traffic density of one lakh or more TVUs (TVU - A unit obtained by multiplying the number of trains with the number of road vehicles passing over the level crossing in 24 hours) i.e. qualifying for replacement by Road over/under bridges on cost sharing basis.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. No such special surveys are conducted by Railways. However, census of traffic at the level crossings is conducted after every three years. The list of level crossings having traffic density of one lakh or more TVUs are brought to the notice of concerned State Governments periodically with request to sponsor proposals for their replacement by Road over/under bridges on cost sharing basis.

National Auto Fuel Policy

6066. SHRI RAVICHANDRAN SIPPIPARAI:

SHRI B. VINOD KUMAR:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is considering any changes in the National Auto Fuel Policy;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the proposed changes are likely to be enforced?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) As per the Auto Fuel Policy approved by the Government on 3.10.2003, Euro-III equivalent grade petrol/diesel has been introduced in all the 11 identified cities namely Delhi/National Capital Region, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Pune, Surat, Kanpur and Agra from 1.4.2005.

Bharat Stage-II petrol has been introduced all over the country with effect from 1.4.2005.

Bharat Stage-II diesel has also been introduced all over India with effect from 1.4.2005 except in Six States and part of one State namely Rajasthan, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Western part of U.P., where, owing to constraints of production at refineries and non-availability of the required grades of products for import, the oil companies had expressed constraints in introducing Bharat Stage-II diesel.

Accordingly, Government have approved the following revised schedule for the introduction of Bharat Stage-II diesel in these States:

- i) Rajasthan from 1.6.2005
- ii) West U.P and Uttaranchal from 1.7.2005
- iii) Madhya Pradesh from 1.9.2005.
- iv) Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir from 1.10.2005

Relaxation in Norms in Purchase of Aids and Appliances

6067. SHRI RAVI PRAKASH VERMA:

SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has decided to relax the norms for the scheme under which assistance is provided to handicapped for purchase and fitting of various types of aids and appliances as reported in the Hindu dated April 9, 2005;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to implement the said decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The details of modifications made under the Scheme for purchase of aids and appliances are given in the statement enclosed.

(c) The revised scheme has already come to force from 1.04.2005.

Statement

Subject	Modifications
(i) Raising of income limit	The income limit for eligibility has been enhanced for 100% concession to Rs.6,500/- per month and for 50% concession to Rs.10,000/- per month.
(ii) Distribution of Assistive devices costing more than Rs. 6,000/-	The motorised tricycles for persons with locomotor disability and software for visually handicapped persons using computers which may cost more than Rs. 6,000/- are permitted. The extent of the subsidy would be Rs. 6000/- only.
(iii) Monitoring and evaluation	2% of annual allocation has been earmarked for monitoring and evaluation expenses.
(iv) Procedure for receipt of grant-in-aid by an implementing agency	The implementing agencies will be requested to keep manuals/literature on main features, maintenance and upkeep of devices, one year free maintenance would be provided by them for assistive devices.
(v) Aids and Appliances to be provided to Visually Handicapped	Braille writing equipments including Brailers, Braille shorthand machines, typewriters for blind students from the X class instead of class XII.
(vi) Increase in coverage of girl child/women	At least 25% of the beneficiaries should be girl children/women.

Petrol and Diesel Prices

6068. SHRI UDAY SINGH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to give

more autonomy to Public Sector oil companies to fix petrol and diesel prices;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the price fixing norms of petrol and diesel are not properly adhered to; and

(d) if so, the mechanism adopted in fixing prices of petrol and diesel?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Although the dismantling of the Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) in the petroleum sector was announced on 1.4.2002, oil marketing companies (OMCs) have been determining their retail selling prices of petrol and diesel in prior consultation with the Government of India. To bring greater transparency into the system, a price band mechanism was outlined with effect from 1 August 2004 allowing OMCs freedom to revise the prices of petrol and diesel within the prescribed price band. However, the steep and volatile increase in the international prices of crude oil resulted in the ceiling of the price band being breached within weeks of its being made operational, resulting in the mechanism being placed in abeyance. Prices of petrol and diesel have remained unchanged since November 2004. The Government is continuously monitoring the price situation while attempting to equitably balance the interests of various stakeholders, viz., consumers, Government and the oil companies.

Modernisation of New Jalpaiguri Railway Station

6069. SHRI JOACHIM BAXLA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is making an action plan to modernise and increase the number of platforms at New Jalpaiguri Railway Station;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the funds allocated for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) There is no plan to increase the number of platforms at New Jalpaiguri station, as there already exist 6 numbers of platforms having capacity to accommodate 24 coach length trains and sufficient for operational purposes at present. However, few works for modernization/ improvement of stations are in progress.

(b) Nine numbers of works at New Jalpaiguri station are in progress at a cost of Rs. 4.05 crore. (i) Provision of 2 numbers escalator, (ii) Neck tiles/ concrete paver block on Platform No.2 & 3 (iii) Renovation of exiting building for shifting of existing Passenger Reservation System at circulating area. (iv) Improvement to platform surface with provision of chequered tiles for disabled person. (v) Construction of retiring room (vi) Provision of

ramp, connecting new Foot over bridge. (vii) Improvement to existing stalls into modular stalls. (viii) Provision of mechanized high pressure cleaning system and (ix) Provision of Light Emitting Diodes based train arrival and departure indicator and coach guidance.

(c) Rs. 66.96 lakh has been allocated for the above mentioned works during 2005-06

[Translation]

Contaminated Water in Rail Neer

6070. SHRI SUBHASH SURESHCHANDRA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that empty bottles of 'Rail Neer' filled with contaminated water are being sold at railway stations;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) whether there is any system to check the quality of packed water bottles being sold at railway stations; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir. The news channel India TV on 06.01.2005 had shown some urchins filling empty Rail Neer bottles from tap water for the purpose of selling it.

(b) The act of buying and selling contaminated water was nowhere shown. Only some urchins filling the Rail Neer bottles were shown.

(c) and (d) There is a regular check by the Railways at railway stations to ensure that only properly sealed water bottles are sold. Bottled water brands for sale at railway stations have to follow stringent norms set up by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). Only those brands which are approved by BIS are given for sale to the passengers. Special drives are launched from time to time to ensure that there is no unauthorized selling of non-branded water.

[English]

Setting up of Perishable Cargo Centre

6071. SHRI B. VINOD KUMAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to set up more centres for perishable cargo for handling vegetables, fruits and marine products at important airports;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) whether a perishable cargo centre is also proposed to be set up at Hyderabad airport; and

(d) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Agricultural and Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (APEDA) has been signed for construction of a State-of-the Art Cold Storage facility for perishable cargo alongwith new integrated cargo terminal at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport at Kolkata.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. A State-of-the Art Centre for perishable cargo is already existing at Hyderabad Airport which was constructed by AAI in cooperation with APEDA in June, 2001. This facility has been leased to M/s. Andhra

Pradesh State Trading Corporation for operation, management & maintenance.

Participation of IRCON in Global Tenders

6072. DR. K. DHANARAJU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Railway Construction Company International Ltd., (IRCON) has participated in Global Tenders;

(b) If so, the details of business/projects procured by the Company during the last three years through Global Tenders; and

(c) the progress made so far on these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a): Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A Statement is attached.

Statement

The details of business/projects procured by the company during the last three years through global Tenders and progress made so far on these projects is as under:

					(Rs. in million)
S.No.	Description of Works	Name of Client	Value of contract	Date of Award	Progress as on 31.03.2005 (%)
1	2	3	4	5	6
2002-03					
1.	Strengthening & four laning of State Highways GPSH-7	Roads & Buildings Dept., Govt. of Gujarat	1,528.40	17.12.2002	52.33%
2.	Upgradation of Katra to Bilgram and Mallawan to Bilhaur plus major maintenance of portion between bilgram to Mallawan of State Highway No. 38 (148.435 kms upgradation & 23.00 kms major maintenance package UPSRP/01)	Uttar Pradesh Public Works Department	1,500.48	11.02.2003	6.13%
3.	Upgradation of Bhognipur - Ghatampur-Chaudaghra State Highway No. 46 (82.296 kms) package UPSRP/04	Uttar Pradesh Public Works Department	699.77	11.02.2003	10.05%
4.	Traction electrification, power supply & power distribution for rail corridor from Trinagar to Tithala Contract No. 7 B	Delhi Metro Rail Corporation	303.10	21.12.2002	Completed in August 2004
5.	Improvement of eleven intersections (Dhaka Urban Transport Project)	Dhaka City Corporation	175.50	01.08.2002	Completed in April 2004

1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Extension of existing Electrical contract in Syria	Lattakia, Syria	109.10	01.08.2002	Completed in March 2003
Total			4,316.35		
2003-2004			Nil	NIL	Nil
2004-05					
1.	Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project - TSNP 02 - Upgradation of Roads from Nagapattinam to Kattumavadi & New bypass at Nagapattinam Tituthurai and Muttupet (In Joint Venture with M/s SMJ, Indonesia)	Highway Department, Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project, Chennai	1,192.64	10.11.2004	In Progress
2.	Improvement, Operation & Maintenance of 4 Laining of Pimpalgaon-Ghule section of NH-3 on BOT basis (In Joint Venture with M/s. Soma Enterprises)	National Highway Authority of India	2405.52	07.03.2005	Under Mobilisation
3.	Construction of Cikampek-Purwakatra - Padalarang Tahap II Pengumuman Pelelangan Terbatas Pembangunan Jalan to Cikampek-Purwakatra-Padalarang Tahap II) for IV.4 package (In Joint Venture with SMJ, Indonesia)	PT JASA MARGA (Persero) (Indonesian Highway Corporation)	120.00	02.04.2004	70.00%
4.	Construction of Dera-Mechara Road Upgrading - Cont. 1: Dera-Manga - ICB No. 02/2003	Ethiopian Roads Authority	1412.83	20.07.2004	3.03%
5.	Beira Rail Concession Project - PMC from Beira Rail Co. (CCFB) to RICIN (IRCON - RITES Joint Venture)	CFM - Government of Mozambique	6.02	30.08.2004	5.00%
6.	Belbari - Chauharawa Pavement Strengthening Project	His Majesty's Govt., Nepal	608.61	28.02.2005	Under Mobilisation
7.	Modernisation of Signalling work at 12 stations on Sylhet-Akhaura section of Bangladesh Railway on Turnkey basis	Bangladesh Railway	325.00	19.02.2005	Under Mobilisation
8.	Extension of 66 Sub-station (Lot 2 - 9 Nos.) on Turnkey basis	Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation	311.40	05.03.2005	Under Mobilisation
Total			6,382.02		

Financial Assistance for Preparation of Directory of Monuments

6073. SHRI M. SHIVANNA: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government has received any request from the Government of Karnataka seeking financial assistance for preparation of comprehensive

directory of unprotected and unsung monuments of Karnataka State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

- (c) Does not arise.

**Freight Route from Haridaspur
to Paradeep**

6074. SHRI ANANTA NAYAK:

SHRI JUAL ORAM:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to develop freight route from Haridaspur to Paradeep in Orissa;

(b) if so, the amount of investment estimated for the said route;

(c) whether the route would be directly connected with Banspani; and

(d) if so, the time by which the entire route is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir. Construction of a new broad gauge railway line from Haridaspur to Paradeep is already a sanctioned project. The project has been identified as part of National Rail Vikas Yojana for strengthening of Port Connectivity routes and is being implemented by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited.

(b) Anticipated cost of the project is Rs. 301.63 crore.

(c) Yes, Sir. The desired connection will be set up once the ongoing Daitari-Banspani new broad gauge line project also gets completed.

(d) Daitari-Banspani new line is targeted to be completed during 2006-07, subject to availability of resources. Haridaspur-Paradeep new line is likely to be completed during 2008-09.

**Allotment of Chemist Stalls
at Stations**

6075. SHRI BRIJBHUSHAN SHARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the policy of Railway Board for allotting Chemist Stalls at Railway Stations;

(b) whether these Chemist stalls are being allotted to unemployed graduates;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the NRI can be allotted chemist stall directly without inviting applications through open tender;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the number of chemist stalls allotted to NRI particularly in Mumbai?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Licences of Chemist Shops are awarded through competitive bidding by calling applications through press notification from eligible categories which should fulfil the following qualifications:

(i) Licensee should have adequate financial infrastructure.

(ii) He should have a valid license from the Drug Controller of the State Government for running a dry store and should fulfil all the conditions necessary therefor.

(iii) He should have a good conduct.

(iv) Licensee should engage qualified pharmacist with a diploma/degree from a government-recognized institution. Persons having experience in pharmacy will be given preference.

(v) He should engage a qualified doctor to render medical services to the passengers at pre-determined consultation fee. The doctor must have a licence to practice medicine from the Medical Council of India/State Government concerned.

The licence for Chemist shops are awarded for a period of 5 years only. License will be renewed once after five years subject to satisfactory performance, and the total licence period shall not exceed ten years.

(b) There is no such provision in the Policy.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) and (f) Do not arise.

[Translation]

Repairing of Residential Houses

6076. SHRI RAMSEVAK SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the irregularities being committed by Military Engineering Service in the repair work of residential houses in the military cantonment of Gwalior;

(b) if so, whether the Government has ordered any inquiry in this regard;

- (c) if so, the details and the outcome thereof;
- (d) the follow-up action taken thereon; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir. No irregularity in the repair work of residential houses by Military Engineer Services, in the Military Cantonment of Gwalior, has been reported.

(b) to (e) Does not arise.

[English]

Auction of Artefacts Relating to Tipu Sultan

6077. SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to auction weaponry and artefacts belonging to Tipu Sultan; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) No, Sir. Govt. has no knowledge about any such proposal for the auction of weaponry and artefacts belonging to Tipu Sultan.

(b) Does not arise.

Outstanding Dues for deployment of State Police

6078. SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether State Police force has been deployed at some of the airports in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, whether a large sum of Andhra Pradesh Government is outstanding against Airports Authority of India (AAI) for deployment of police force at airports in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) if so, the amount paid during each of the last three years and the total amount outstanding as on date; and

(d) the steps taken or being taken by the Government to reimburse the outstanding amount to the Government of Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Rs.79.00 lakhs of Andhra Pradesh Government is outstanding as on date against Airports Authority of India (AAI).

(c) The amount paid to State Police during each of the last three years is given below:

Year	Amount (Rs. in lakhs)
2002-03	96.68
2003-04	Nil
2004-05	10.04

(d) Airports Authority of India is being advised to clear pending bills.

Replacement of Old Signal System

6079. SHRI MAHBOOB ZAHEDI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that old signal system exists at Bardhaman-Ajimganj via Bolpur Rail line of West Bengal;

(b) if so, whether the Government would consider to replace the old signal system on the said rail route by the latest signal system;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the time by which the old signal system is likely to be replaced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Replacement works with Multiple Aspect Colour Light signalling and rehabilitation works of signalling gears has been sanctioned costing approximate Rs.33 crore, in the Bardhaman-Ajimganj via Bolpur Rail line of West Bengal. The outlay for these works for the year 2005-2006 is approximate Rs.9.8 crore.

(d) Provision of new signalling system is likely to be completed by March, 2007.

[Translation]

Grants to States in Lump-Sum

6080. SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria for providing financial assistance to schools being run in the States under the 'Book Bank Scheme' for the students belonging to Scheduled Castes, and

(b) the financial assistance provided under the scheme during each of the last three years till date, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) and (b) Financial assistance under the scheme of "Book Bank for Scheduled Castes" is not being provided for setting up of book banks at school level. But, under the scheme financial assistance used to be released to States/UTs to provide books to deserving students pursuing Graduate/Post Graduate level courses in Medical, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary, Polytechnic, Law, Chartered Accountancy, MBA and Bio-Science. The scheme was in operation as an independent scheme up to the year 2002-03 and was merged with the scheme of Post-Matric scholarship to the students belonging to the Scheduled Castes w.e.f. 1.4.2003.

State-wise financial assistance released under the Book Bank Scheme during the year 2002-03 is enclosed as statement.

Statement

*Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Book Bank for SCs-
Central Assistance released during the year 2002-03*

S. No.	Name of the State/UT	Amount Released (Rs. in lakh)
1	2	3
1.	Andhra Pradesh	76.43
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Nil
3.	Assam	2.78
4.	Bihar	10.00
5.	Chhattisgarh	5.31
6.	Goa	Nil
7.	Gujarat	Nil
8.	Haryana	8.47
9.	Himachal Pradesh	Nil
10.	Jammu and Kashmir	5.99

1	2	3
11.	Jharkhand	Nil
12.	Karnataka	115.63
13.	Kerala	16.79
14.	Madhya Pradesh	24.99
15.	Maharashtra	Nil
16.	Manipur	Nil
17.	Meghalaya	Nil
18.	Mizoram	Nil
19.	Nagaland	Nil
20.	Orissa	Nil
21.	Punjab	14.51
22.	Rajasthan	Nil
23.	Sikkim	Nil
24.	Tamil Nadu	61.86
25.	Tripura	1.18
26.	Uttar Pradesh	87.85
27.	Uttaranchal	Nil
28.	West Bengal	3.21
1.	Andaman and Nicobar Island	Nil
2.	Chandigarh	Nil
3.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	Nil
4.	Daman and Diu	Nil
5.	Delhi	12.00
6.	Lakshdweep	Nil
7.	Pondicherry	Nil
Total		447.00

[English]

Marketing of Petroleum Products

6081. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a huge demand for petroleum products in the country;

(b) If so, the amount spent for marketing of their products by the Oil PSUs during each of the last three years, PSU-wise;

(c) whether the Government felt any need for marketing of petroleum products of oil PSUs in the presence of such high demand; and

(d) If so, the steps taken to keep the marketing costs at a lower level and on need basis only, by the Oil PSUs?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) There is a growing demand for petroleum products in the country as reflected in the following consumption figures for the last three years:

Year	Quantity (in MMT)
2002-03	104.1
2003-04	107.8
2004-05 (Provisional)	111.7

(b) According to the information supplied by the PSU oil marketing companies (OMCs), the expenditure incurred for marketing petroleum products during the last three years is as under:

Name of the Company	(Rs. in crores)		
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05 (Provisional)
IOC	2350	2449	2284
HPCL	752	836	896
BPCL	1187	1216	1215
IBP	306	383	410

(c) and (d) With the advent of deregulation of oil sector, private marketers have also commenced retail marketing of petroleum products, thus making the market competitive. Therefore, PSU OMCs are required to improve their marketing performance to enhance customer service levels to sustain growth and ensure their survival in a competitive market.

OMCs have taken a number of steps to rationalize their marketing costs, including:

- (i) Rationalization of manpower and infrastructure.
- (ii) Use of integrated planning software for optimizing operations from the purchase of crude to the distribution of products on a least cost basis.
- (iii) Need-based promotional expenses for products and markets where there is severe competition,
- (iv) Inventory management across the country.

LNG from Qatar

6082. SHRI K. C. PALANISAMY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Qatar has agreed in principle to enter into a new agreement under which India can import 20 million tonnes of LNG (Liquified Natural Gas) annually from Qatar; and

(b) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) During the visit of the Emir of Qatar, a proposal was made by the Indian side for progressively increasing the purchase of LNG from Qatar to 20 million tonnes over the next twenty years. Qatar has agreed in principle to work towards this target. Commercial negotiations will commence shortly.

Indian Archaeological Service

6083. SHRI IQBAL AHMED SARADGI: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal/demand for a separate Indian Archaeological Service;

(b) If so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY) (a) to (c) Government considered the proposal to set up an Archaeological and Heritage Service of India to attract professionals to Archaeological Survey of India on the basis of the All India Civil Services Examination. However, the technical cadres in the Archaeological Survey of India being multi-functional and not uni-functional as a pyramidal structure, it was not found feasible to integrate them into one Central Service.

The various agencies/wings of the Government like Union Public Service Commission, Department of Personnel and Training etc. listed out numerous practical problems in induction of different technical and specialized professionals and their subsequent integration into a common cadre. Considering all these practical problems, the Government has dropped the proposal to constitute a Central Archaeological Service.

Committee of Ministers on Minorities

6084. SHRI D.P. SAROJ:

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has any plan to constitute a Committee of Ministers to supervise various schemes/programmes being run by various ministries and departments for welfare of Minorities;

(b) the details thereof along with objectives and composition thereof;

(c) whether despite large amounts being allocated to number of programmes for Minorities, the desired results has not been achieved;

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(e) whether the Government has any plan to start/launch awareness campaigns to ensure that Minorities avail benefits of these schemes;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether the Government also encourage State Governments to implement all existing schemes for empowerment of the Minority Community; and

(h) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken/ to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The budget allocation of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment for minorities is being effectively utilized.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) and (f) Ministry has already been publicising the

schemes and programmes through Electronic, Print and Outdoor Media to spread information on the schemes and programmes of the Govt. for the welfare of minorities. Moreover, the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) organizes Awareness camps through its State Channelising Agencies for creating awareness among the target groups about its schemes. During 2004-05 a total of 145 awareness camps were organized by NMDFC at various places in the country.

(g) and (h) The Ministry has been impressing upon the State Governments for effective implementation of the schemes and programmes of the Ministry during the meetings with the Secretary level officers from the States. Moreover, the programmes of NMDFC are mainly implemented by the State Channelising Agencies nominated by the respective State Governments.

[Translation]

Encroachment of Indian Territorial Water by Pakistan

6085. SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan is encroaching upon Indian territorial water in the Arabian sea;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Regular surveillance-cum-presence along the International Maritime Boundary Line is being carried out by Indian Navy and Coast Guard to prevent incursions by any country.

[English]

Aero Ambulance

6086. DR. M. JAGANNATH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to introduce aero ambulances to airlift critically ill patients on the pattern of the system available in other countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which these are likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir. However, some private operators are offering this service. National carriers also provide for stretchers, wheel chairs, removal of seats in case of medical exigencies.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Court Cases of Railway Employees

6087. SHRI BHUPENDRASINH SOLANKI:

SHRI MAHESH KANODIA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of court cases pertaining to Railway Employees pending in the Allahabad High Court;

(b) the actual strength of the Railway Advocates in the High Court at Allahabad for contesting the court cases;

(c) whether there is any procedure for distribution of court cases among the Railway advocates;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by the Railways to minimize the court cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) The information is being collected from Zonal Railways.

(b) 40 no. of advocates have been empanelled as Railway Advocates for contesting cases in the High Court at Allahabad.

(c) and (d) The cases are distributed by authorized Railway Officers if the High Court is situated in the same city as Headquarters of Zonal Railways. For other High Courts the cases are distributed by the Standing Counsel for Railways and who has to ensure that the distribution of work amongst the Railway Advocates is fair.

(e) Railway's actions are guided by the laid down rules & procedures so as to prevent disputes. However, it has been observed that whenever any action is taken against an employee despite taking due care of the rules, the employee is aggrieved and more often than not, seeks judicial redressal.

Construction of Night Shelters for Destitute Persons

6088. SHRI S K. KHARVENTHAN: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to provide financial assistance for construction of night shelters to accommodate destitute persons in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) No, Sir, There is no proposal in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

(b) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Commercial Use of LPG

6089. DR. CHINTA MOHAN:

SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH "LALAN":

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether besides the use of L.P.G. as a domestic fuel in the country, its commercial use is also taking place through various channels;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the estimated percentage of the annual average commercial use of L.P.G.;

(c) whether the Government has made any arrangements for sale of L.P.G. for commercial use through retails outlets;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the estimated annual average sale of the L.P.G. through such arrangements?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) supply LPG for non-domestic purposes like heating; fuel in industries and auto fuel. The sale of LPG for non-domestic purposes during the year 2004-05 was estimated to be 3,85,000 Metric Tonnes (MT), which is about 3.9% of the total sale of LPG.

(c) to (e) OMCs are selling auto LPG for vehicles through their Auto LPG Dispensing Stations (ALDS). The sale of auto LPG during the year 2004-05 was 31,000 MT.

Safety of Buildings in Taj Premises

6090. SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY:

SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL:

SHRI SUGRIB SINGH:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to conduct any study regarding safety of all the buildings in the Taj Premises;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the norms prescribed by the Government with regard to the said study;

(d) whether the Government has paid any amount in advance to the Central Building Research Institute for conducting the said survey;

(e) if so, the details thereof and the justification for making the advance payments; and

(f) the time by which the survey is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Archaeological Survey of India has requested Survey of India to check the verticality of minarets of the Taj Mahal and the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee to conduct Comprehensive Geotechnical and Structural Investigations of Taj Mahal.

(c) All investigations should be non-destructive without causing any harmful effect to the fabric of the monument and by using state-of-the art technology.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) Rs. 30.00 lakhs has been paid to the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) for conducting the said study. The advance payment has been made as per the terms and conditions of the CBRI.

(f) The time indicated by the Central Building Research Institute to complete the study is two years. The Survey of India has completed the field work and their final report is awaited.

[English]

TV Serials on Women Freedom Fighters

6091. SHRI VIKRAMBHAI ARJANBHAI MADAM: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government is considering to produce and telecast TV serials of Women Freedom Fighters;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) the time by which these TV serials are expected to be produced and telecast?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Prasar Bharati has informed that no special series on this subject is currently under consideration.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Preservation of Buddhist Sites

6092. SHRI BIKRAM KESHARI DEO: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any grant/aid has been received from the Government of Japan for the preservation, and up gradation of Archaeological Buddhist sites in Orissa; and

(b) if so, the quantum of grant/aid received and out of it how much has been spent so far?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) No, Sir. Archaeological Survey of India has not received any grant/aid from Government of Japan for the preservation and upgradation of Archaeological Buddhist Sites in Orissa in the recent past.

(b) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Funds Spent on Advertisement by Railways

6093. SHRI SURAJ SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details regarding advertisement policy and its implementation by the Railways; and

(b) the amount spent on advertisements by the Railways during each of the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Railways follow the advertising policy of the Government of India framed by the Directorate of Advertising & Visual Publicity (DAVP) under the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. Depending on the publicity requirements and the availability of funds,

Railways release their advertisements to the DAVP approved publications on rotation basis and at the DAVP rates.

(b) The expenditure incurred by the Railways on advertisements during the years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 were Rs.51.40 crore, Rs 67.85 crore and Rs.67.36 crore respectively.

Recruitment Rules for Employees of Prasar Bharati

6094. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH "LALAN":

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether thousands of employees were employed in Doordarshan and All India Radio in the capacity of Government employee when Prasar Bharati came into existence in November 1997;

(b) if so, the total strength thereof alongwith the number of employees out of them adjusted in Prasar Bharati and the Institute/body under which the remaining employees have been adjusted;

(c) whether the Recruitment Rules and Service conditions for different categories of staff have been finalised by the Prasar Bharati;

(d) if not, the reasons for the delay; and

(e) the time by which these are expected to be finalised?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) AIR and Doordarshan together have a sanctioned strength of approximately 47000 posts. The employees of AIR and Doordarshan working in Prasar Bharati are presently working on deemed deputation to Prasar Bharati Corporation.

(c) to (e) No, Sir. The formulation of Recruitment Rules, service conditions etc. for different categories of employees of Prasar Bharati are under finalisation. The delay in finalisation is due to consultation with employees Associations and studying various alternatives in other PSU's. In view of the above no time frame can be specified at this stage.

Deployment of Bomb Disposal Squads

6095. SHRI HEMMAL MURMU:

SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the operation of the trains is being disturbed due to the rumours of planting of bombs in various trains and this creates a sense of fear among the passengers boarding the train;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) the total number of trains operation disturbed due to the rumour of bombs during the last one year, till date and the bomb disposal squad had to be called;

(d) the effective steps to arrest those spreading such false rumours;

(e) whether the Government proposes to deploy bomb disposal squads and security personnel equipped with state-of-the art weapons on the important trains; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. On getting information, thorough checking is done by the Government Railway Police Railway assisted by the Railway Protection Force mostly after removing the passengers from trains. Dog Squad and Bomb Squad are also called to thoroughly check the trains to detect explosives/bombs and isolate/neutralize them.

(c) On 63 occasions, the train operations were disturbed during the last one year i.e. April, 2004 to March, 2005 due to the rumours of planting of bombs for which bomb disposal squads were called to conduct thorough checking of the trains.

(d) Close liaison is being maintained with Government Railway Police, Civil Police and other departments to check such kinds of incidents. Staff manning the Public Call Offices (PCOs) in Railway station area is also briefed regularly to keep watch over such callers. Caller Identification system has been provided in some selected offices in order to identify/locate the telephone from where such calls are made to identify the callers.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Does not arise.

Bullet Proof Vehicles

6096. SHRI RAKESH SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has enquired into the reasons for the failure of bullet proof vehicles manufactured by the Vehicle Factory, Jabalpur;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether any scheme is under consideration of the Government to manufacture any other vehicle in the said factory; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI BHOY HANDIQUE): (a) The Department of Defence Production has not received any report of failure of vehicles bullet proof at Vehicle Factory, Jabalpur.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) There is no scheme to manufacture any other Bullet Proof vehicle at Vehicle Factory, Jabalpur.

(d) Does not arise.

[English]

Share in Iran Oil Fields

6097. SHRI K. J. S. P. REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has got any assurance of a share in two oil-producing fields in Iran; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) In the first meeting of the India-Iran Joint Working Group (JWG) held on 8-9 May, 2003 in New Delhi and continued in Tehran on 11-12 May, 2003 the Iranian side agreed to negotiate the award of a discovered and a semi-discovered Iranian oilfield to an Indian public sector oil company, subject to technical and commercial competitiveness. In subsequent bilateral discussions between the Minister of Petroleum of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Secretary, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India during the 9th International Energy Forum (IEF) meeting held in Amsterdam on 23rd May 2004, the Iranian Minister offered

OVL a 20% share in the Khushk and Hosseinieh Field (jointly termed as the "Yadavaran Field").

Also, in a meeting between the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India and the Minister of Petroleum, Islamic Republic of Iran, in Vienna on 16.9.2004, the Iranian side offered 20% of the rights and obligations of the service contract between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and a third party to the Indian consortium in the Yadavaran Oilfield out of the reserved part of the rights and obligations.

In the light of the understandings reached, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 7.1.2005 between NIOC and ONGC-Videsh Ltd. (OVL) which, inter-alia, includes the following:

- (i) Upon execution of service contract between NIOC and the Operator Contractor, NIOC/NIOC Affiliate shall offer to assign 20% rights and obligations in the service contract for development of Yadavaran oil field to OVL, subject to OVL's acceptance of the offer letter from NIOC.
- (ii) OVL shall also have the option to participate on nomination basis, in the development of Jufeyr oilfield as operator with 100% rights and obligations on terms and conditions of the service contract, subject to the purchase of LNG to be produced from the above field.
- (iii) OVL have the option, also to participate in the development of North Azadegan field, on nomination basis with 75% rights and obligations on the same terms and conditions as for the Jufeyr field. The participation depends upon the techno economic evaluation of the field.

Facilities to Persons with Spinal Injury

6098 SHRI KISHANBHAI V.PATEL:

SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL:

SHRI SUGRIB SINGH:

SHRI RAGHUVeer SINGH KOSHAL:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government provides support for capital expenditure besides continuing support for sponsoring free beds for patients with spinal injuries;

(b) if so, the details of financial assistance provided to spinal injury centres alongwith all kinds of

assistance and facilities provided/available to such patients in such centres and number of persons benefited therefrom, centre-wise;

(c) whether treatment facility for spinal injury is being provided in the Medical Colleges;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Government of Italy has given assistance to Indian Spinal Injury Centre, New Delhi;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) the details of Spinal Injury Centres and Regional Rehabilitation Centres (RRCs) presently functioning in the country;

(h) whether the Government proposes to set up more Spinal Injury Centres or (RRCs) for persons with spinal injuries; and

(i) if so, the locations thereof, State wise and the time by which these centres are likely to start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) to (g) To ensure availability of super speciality Centre for treating spinal injuries in the country, it was decided to set up an India Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC) at New Delhi as a joint venture of Government of India and Government of Italy. ISIC was provided a grant of Rs. 2.50 crores for construction in two instalments by Government of India while machinery and equipment for medical care, visit of experts and training of Indian Personnel etc. was provided by Government of Italy. Centre started functioning from 1997. Government of India provides reimbursement for 25 free beds while cost of five free beds is borne by ISIC. 1037 patients have been treated by ISIC (upto 31st March 2005).

Apart from ISIC at New Delhi four Regional Centres for providing treatment to patients with spinal injuries have been set up (i) Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh (ii) Cuttack in Orissa (iii) Mohali in Punjab and (iv) Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh.

Except Bareilly, the Regional Centres are functioning from temporary buildings provided by the State Governments. The construction work for new buildings on the land provided free of cost by the respective State Governments is going on. The RRC Bareilly has since started functioning from their new building. These four Centres have benefited 91926 patients (upto February 2005). Government of India has provided financial assistance of Rs. 11.60 crores to these four RRCs upto 31-3-2005.

(h) No Sir.

(i) Does not arise.

Plan to Increase the Axle Load Limit

6099. SHRI EKNATH MAHADEO GAIKWAD:

SHRIMATI NIVEDITA MANE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways plan to increase the axle load limit of wagons for movement of freight; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The maximum permissible axle load on Indian Railways has been increased to 21.82 Metric Tonne.

It is also contemplated that identified freight wagons can be loaded up to the axle load of 22.9 Metric Tonne on certain identified iron ore routes as a Pilot Project for a limited period of one year, with close monitoring.

Abolition of Posts

6100. SHRI RUPCHAND MURMU: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has decided to downsize the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government has identified posts in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for abolition; and

(d) if so, the number of posts identified for abolition?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (d) The Expenditure Reforms Commission has, inter alia, recommended winding up Films Division, Photo Division, Song & Drama Division, Directorate of Field Publicity, Directorate of Publications Division, handing over of Film & Television Institute of India, Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Directorate of Film Festivals to Film Industry and Children's Film Society, India, to Non-Governmental Organisations; disinvesting National Film Development Corporation Limited and Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited and reducing/rationalising the role of other units.

These recommendations are being processed. A final decision has not yet been taken.

Agreement for Commercial Storage Facilities

6101. SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH:
SHRI ANIRUDH PRASAD ALIAS
SADHU YADAV:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Oil Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited have initiated steps with M/s. Saudi Aramco for criss cross investments in refineries in India and Saudi Arabia;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether IOC has entered into an agreement with M/s. Saudi Aramco for commercial storage facilities in India; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOC) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPC) have initiated discussion with Saudi Aramco for possible Saudi investment in IOC's Paradeep refinery and HPC's Vishakhapatnam refinery expansion project. The proposed Saudi investment is associated with possible investment by HPC and IOC in Yanbu refinery in Saudi Arabia.

(c) and (d) The question of India-Saudi cooperation in the establishment of commercial storage facilities was broached during the recent visit of the Minister to Saudi Arabia, but commercial negotiations are yet to begin.

[Translation]

Establishment of Handicapped Rehabilitation Centres in M.P.

6102. SHRI KRISHNA MURARI MOGHE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Madhya Pradesh has forwarded any proposal to Union Government to accord approval for establishment of Handicapped Rehabilitation Centre in those districts where DDRC is not available;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reaction of the Union Government thereto; and

(d) the time by which the approval to the said proposal is likely to be accorded?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government of Madhya Pradesh has submitted a proposal for establishment of DDRCs in the remaining 24 districts where there is no other rehabilitation centre.

(c) and (d) It is planned to set up 59 DDRCs in the whole country in the remaining period of X Plan. The choice of districts for the purpose would be based on the following criteria:

(i) Districts where currently no services are available for persons with disabilities either through Government, Semi Government or Voluntary agencies.

(ii) The State Government provides rent-free well-connected building for the purpose.

(iii) Higher prevalence rate of disability.

(iv) Longer distance from the existing DDRC or similar service center.

Reduction in Penalty Amount for Ticketless Travellers

6103. SHRI PUNNU LAL MOHALE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to reduce the amount of penalty of Rs.250 being charged from ticketless/irregular travellers;

(b) whether any representation in this regard has also been received by the Government;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto and the time by which decision on reduction in penalty amount is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Some representations for reduction in the penalty amount of Rs.250/- have been received but there is no proposal to make amendments in this regard.

(d) Does not arise.

*[English]***New War Doctrine**

6104. SHRI SUGRIB SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Army proposes to hold two division-level exercises in Rajasthan and Punjab to test its new war doctrine;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether army will also keep watch on the situation along with LoC in the coming months and also monitoring the spread of Naxalites activities in the country as reported in the Times of India dated April 8, 2005; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The Army is conducting two Division level exercises with troops in Rajasthan and Punjab during 2005, as part of its annual training schedule where certain formations, by rotation carry out manoeuvres to test their operational readiness.

(c) and (d) The Army is deployed along the Line of Control (LoC) and it continues to monitor the situation along the LoC in the interest of national security. However, there is no proposal to deploy Army in anti-Naxal operations.

Development of Railway Platforms

6105. SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the proposals submitted by the Government of Kerala for the development of Railway platforms in Kerala during 2005-06; and

(b) the action taken by the Railways thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No proposal has been received from the Government of Kerala for the development of Railway platforms in Kerala during 2005-06.

(b) Does not arise.

Visitors to Taj Mahal

6106. SHRI KULDEEP BISHNOI:

SHRI ATIQA AHAMAD:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has conducted any study to ascertain tourist carrying capacity of Taj Mahal every day in order to avoid extra pressure on the monument;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefore; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to develop specific visitors path in Taj Mahal to avoid congestion and also encourage tourists to see other structures in side Taj premises like Museum and other buildings on either sides of the mausoleum?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (d) No specific study to ascertain the carrying capacity of Taj Mahal has been conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India. However, the data collected through the sale of tickets at Taj Mahal indicates that nearly 6000 visitors, on an average, visit Taj Mahal on a daily basis excluding the visitors below 15 years of age who are exempted from paying entry fee as per rule 6 of Ancient Monuments, Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, 1959.

As most of the visitors follow the main pathway leading to the mausoleum, a plan has been drawn to regulate the movement of visitors to use the pathways on the western and eastern sides to enable them to see other interesting parts of the Taj Mahal including the site museum and this arrangement would also ensure decongestion of the main pathway.

Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867

6107. SHRI SUBODH MOHITE: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted for considering the issue of amendments to the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 has since submitted its report to the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the time by which GoM is likely to submit its report to the Government?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) The Cabinet, in its meeting dated 29th September 2004, while considering the Amendment to Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, directed that

the matter may, in the first instance, be considered by a Group of Ministers. Accordingly, the Government has constituted a Group of Ministers.

(c) It is not possible to indicate definite time frame.

[Translation]

Ammunition Factories

6108. SHRIMATI NEETA PATERIYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as per the rules prescribed by the Ministry of Defence the ammunition factories should be outside the residential vicinity;

(b) If so, whether all ammunition factories under the Ministry of Defence in Madhya Pradesh are on the outskirts of the city and are on completely safe place;

(c) if not, whether Ministry of Defence is formulating any alternative scheme to shift these factories outside the cities; and

(d) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE): (a) Ammunition Factories are located at safe distance from residential vicinity, as per prescribed safety regulations.

(b) Yes, Sir. Ammunition factories in Madhya Pradesh are located at a safe distance, as per prescribed safety regulations.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

[English]

Telecast Rights

6109. SHRI G.V. HARSHA KUMAR: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prasar Bharati is considering to give rights for telecast of 17 Doordarshan channels in 146 countries as reported in the Hindu, dated January 31, 2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has taken any steps to improve the quality of Delhi Doordarshan Programmes and News; and

(d) If so, the steps taken/to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) Prasar Bharati has informed that they had floated a tender for the worldwide distribution of 13 TV channels and 12 Radio channels and that they are now processing the offers received against its tender.

(c) and (d) Prasar Bharati has informed that it is the constant endeavour of Doordarshan to enhance the quality of its programmes and news covering national and international events, through innovative programme formats.

Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons

6110. SHRI P. S. GADHAVI: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that disabled persons particularly in Gujarat are most neglected;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities has spent only Rs. 1.45 crore out of sanctioned, outlay of Rs. 7.44 crore so far;

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

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(e) the steps taken/to be taken by the Government for the rehabilitation of disabled persons through employment generating schemes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) to (d) No, Sir. The utilization of funds is measured on the basis of the Revised Estimates and actual expenditure. Thus, out of revised estimate of funds of Rs.3.05 crore allotted to the Office of Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCD) during the 9th Five Year Plan period, an amount of Rs.1.49 crore was spent. Major reason for non-utilisation of the funds was that the office of CCD could be set up only by the middle of the 9th Plan due to administrative procedure involved in getting required clearances/ approvals.

(e) The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 provides for 3% reservation in the vacancies for persons

with disabilities in identified posts in the Central and State Govt. organizations. The Government has set up a Committee to review the list of identified posts to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Government. The Govt. has been supporting the Vocational Training Centres and Vocational Rehabilitation Centres to train the persons with disabilities for employment. National Handicapped Finance & Development Corporation (NHFDC) provides loans, on soft terms through State Channelising Agencies to persons with disability for self-employment and income generating activities. A number of workshops have been planned in collaboration with NHFDC and State Govts. to sensitize the Non-Governmental Organizations and to encourage persons with disabilities to take up self employment ventures. Two workshops have been conducted so far.

Railway Projects with Foreign Assistance

6111. SHRI JASHUBHAI DHANABHAI BARAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the on-going Railway projects for which foreign assistance is being received alongwith the estimated cost of each project;
- (b) the funds received so far by the Union Government for each project and how much has been spent/utilised thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has paid any commitment charges against the foreign assistance; and
- (d) if so, the amount paid by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) A statement is attached.

Statement

(a) and (b) The details of Railway projects for which foreign assistance is being received, their estimated cost, external aid received and utilized are as below:

- (i) The Asian Development Bank has extended a loan to finance the Railway Sector Improvement Project with the objective of enhancing capacity of the rail network and improving operational efficiency/safety. The sub-projects to be funded from the loan are principally in the Golden Quadrilateral and its Diagonals and Port

Connectivity projects. The estimated cost of the Project is US\$ 579.2 million. The loan amount is US Dollar 313.6 million. The loan has not been drawn so far.

- (ii) Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP), which has both road and rail components, is being partly funded by World Bank. The estimated cost of the rail component is Rs.3125 crore. A loan of US Dollar 463 million has been extended by International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and a credit of SDR 62.5 million has been extended by International Development Association (IDA). The IBRD loan and IDA credit earmarked for the rail component are US Dollar 305 million and about US Dollar 60 million respectively. An amount of Rs.177.72 crore and Rs. 252.63 crore has so far been utilized from the loan and credit respectively.
- (iii) Project of Modernisation of Signalling between Ghaziabad and Kanpur is being partly funded by Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), Germany. The estimated cost of the project is Rs.425 crore. The loan amount is DM 185 million (Euro 95 million). An amount of Rs.5.57 crore has been utilized so far from this loan.

(c) and (d) Yes. Sir. A total amount of Rs.23.19 crore has been paid by the Government as commitment charges.

[Translation]

Films on Great Personalities

6112. SHRI BRAJESH PATHAK: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has got any films produced on great personalities during the last three years, till date; and

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the amount spent, thereon, film-wise?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Films Division has produced 22 biographical films from 2002-03 till date and National Film Development Corporation has produced 1 film (co-production) during 2002-03 on great personalities, the details of which alongwith film-wise cost are indicated in the statement.

Statement*Films Division*

S. No.	Title of the Film	Synopsis	Cost of Production (Rs. in lakhs)
Year 2002-03			
1.	M.N. Roy (shorter version)	Film on great revolutionary M.N. Roy	1.83
2.	Shahadat	Film on Chandra Shekhar Azad	4.27
3.	Balidan	Film on Sardar Bhagat Singh	4.26
4.	Mother Teresa (shorter version)	Film on Mother Teresa	1.25
5.	Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan	Film on Jaiprakash Narayan	8.52
6.	Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose	Film on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose	0.43
7.	Lalan	Film on Baul Singer Lalan Shah Fakir	12.00
8.	Madam Bhikaji Cama	Film on Madam Bhikaji Cama	11.26
9.	Uma	Film on Kathak Dancer Uma Sharma	15.88
10.	Know Your Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee	Film on former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihar Vajpayee	6.85
11.	Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit	Film on Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit	8.44
Year 2003-04			
1.	Chakraji	Film on noted Hindi writer Sh. Sudarshan Singh "Chakra".	8.80
2.	Sangeet Masiha Anil Biswas (shorter version)	Film on Music Director Anil Biswas	2.25
Year 2004-05			
1.	Rajiv Gandhi (1944-1991)	Film on former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi	7.40
2.	Benipuri-Ek-Bahuaayami Vakititva	Film on Shri Rambriksba Benipuri	6.98
3.	Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia	Film on Dr. Ram Manobar Lohia	13.75
4.	Biju Patnaik - An Eagle in the Storm	Film on late Shri Biju Patnaik	16.79
5.	Rama Devi	Film on Rama Devi, a great social reformer	6.21
6.	Ashok Kumar	Film on veteran actor and Dadasaheb Phake Award Winner Shri Ashok Kumar	12.78
7.	Mahamahopadhyay Samanta Chandrashekhar	Film on 19 century astronomer Mahamahopadhyay Samanta Chandrashekhar	8.52
Year 2005-06 (till date)			
1.	Alarmel Valli	Film on Alarmel Valli	13.05
2.	Rashtrakavi Ramdhari Singh Dinkar	Film on Rashtrakavi Ramdhari Singh Dinkar	8.80

National Film Development Corporation**Year 2002-03**

1.	Devi Ahilyabai	Film on Devi Ahilyabai - A co-production by National Film Development Corporation with Govt. of Maharashtra & Govt. of India	138.00
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Loss of Revenue

6113. SHRI RAGHUVeer SINGH KOSHAL: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in its Report No.4 of 2004 (Civil) has observed that Doordarshan arbitrarily allowed high production/commissioning cost and also incurred loss of Rs. 1.50 crore by short-billing the commercial time utilised by the producer/agency;

(b) if so, the facts thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to check recurrence of such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The C&AG in its Report No.4 of 2004 (Civil) has made these observations.

(c) The C&AG para is under examination in the Ministry.

Recovery of Outstanding Amounts from Advertising Agencies

6114. SHRI SAJJAN KUMAR: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Film Development Corporation suffering heavy losses due to the non-recovery of outstanding amounts to the tune of crore of rupees from the advertising agencies appointed by it;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken/ being taken for recovery of outstanding amounts from the advertisement agents?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir. The Corporation has been marketing Commercial Time on the slots allotted by Doordarshan to various advertising agencies and many of the agencies have defaulted in payment of dues.

(b) Recovery of dues could not be effected due to discontinuance of the marketing of Commercial Time of Doordarshan by the Corporation since September, 2003 as Doordarshan started marketing its Commercial Time on its own. The details of the defaulting agencies are as in statement enclosed.

(c) The steps taken by the Corporation for recovery of outstanding dues are as follows:

- (i) Discussions with the agencies are in progress for reconciliation of accounts and clarifications wherever required for making payments.
- (ii) Officials of the Corporation are taking follow up action individually for recovery.
- (iii) A special audit has been initiated to examine thoroughly the details of outstanding dues and the recoverability of the amounts.
- (iv) Legal notices have been served on agencies who have not come forward for settlement.
- (v) A Cell has been constituted for recovery of outstanding dues and for serving legal notices and initiating appropriate proceedings by way of filing suit/criminal cases against the defaulting agencies.

Statement

Outstanding Position as on 31.03.2005

S.No.	Name of the Agency	Amount (Rupees in lakhs)
1	2	3
1.	M/s. Aditya Enterprises Indore	35.58
2.	M/s. A & A Films Delhi	94.31
3.	M/s. Bisawa Creations	183.41
4.	M/s. Cine Penta Pvt. Ltd.	493.10
5.	M/s. Contract Advt. Pvt. Ltd.	22.87
6.	M/s Creative Channel	314.71
7.	M/s. Hindustan Thompsons Associates	873.86
8.	M/s. Indradhanush	104.42
9.	M/s. IPSEM Healthcare Limited	95.86
10.	M/s. Mudra Communications P. Ltd.	55.00
11.	M/s. Ogilvy & Mather Advt.	37.14
12.	M/s. Popular Ent. Work	60.60
13.	M/s Prachar Communication Ltd.	228.51
14.	M/s. Purnima Advertising Agency	21.00
15.	M/s. R.K. Swamy/BBDO Ad. P. Ltd.	14.29

1	2	3
16.	M/s. Rediffusion	24.66
17.	M/s. Sanitex Chemicals Ltd., Indore	43.24
18.	M/s. Ulka Advertising	18.87
12.	M/s. WPP Marketing (Mumbai)	20.00
Total		2741.46

[English]

**Set-Top Boxes of Doordarshan
DTH Services**

6115. SHRI RAVI PRAKASH VERMA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Doordarshan has launched DTH service across the country;

(b) if so, whether the Government is aware that the set-top boxes of Doordarshan DTH services are not working properly;

(c) if so, whether the Bureau of Indian Standards has fixed any norms and technical standards for set-top boxes;

(d) if so, whether the norms and technical standards set up by BIS are being followed; and

(e) if not, the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Doordarshan does not market the set-top boxes for reception of their KU band service. These are available in the open market. However, the set top boxes provided by Doordarshan at public expense in certain undercovered areas for demonstration purposes are reported to be working satisfactorily.

(c) to (e) Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has laid down standards for the set top boxes for the receptions of pay DTH service. However, no separate standards have been laid down by Bureau of Indian Standards for free-to-air DTH set top boxes. BIS has been approached for extending facility for certification of STBs.

Refrigerated Vans

6116. SHRI B. VINOD KUMAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways have introduced special refrigerated vans for transport of perishable food items such as vegetables, fruits, frozen foods etc.;

(b) if so, the number of such vans introduced so far, zone-wise;

(c) whether there is any proposal to set up a separate integrated Freight Complex exclusively for food products transportation; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A total of 10 Refrigerated vans have been, introduced so far on Indian Railways for transportation of perishable commodities including fruits, frozen foods etc. All these Refrigerated Vans are in Indian Railways' pool and can be deployed anywhere in India as per demand.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

**Reserved Posts in Doordarshan
and All India Radio**

6117. SHRI ANANTA NAYAK: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the number of posts in various categories lying vacant in Doordarshan and All India Radio as on date;

(b) the number of posts out of them are reserved for SCs/STs; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to clear the backlog of SC/ST vacancies?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[Translation]

Under-hand Sale of C.S.D. Goods

6118. SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether reports have been received regarding under-hand sale of C.S.D. goods in the market;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the names of the places in Uttar Pradesh where from such reports have been received; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) During the months of June-July last year, a few cases of alleged illegal sale of items of Canteen Stores Department (CSD) were reported from Bareilly, Meerut and Agra in Uttar Pradesh. In Bareilly, a few CSD items were alleged to be sold from some civil shops. In Agra and Meerut, CSD stores were found with persons not entitled to purchase items from CSD canteens.

(d) The Government has issued detailed instructions like strict adherence to an upper monetary limit for sale of CSD items, strict action against personnel indulging in sale of CSD items in the open market and keeping of vigil by military police/military intelligence.

[English]

Bidding for Establishment of FM Stations

6119. SHRI ANANDARAO VITHOBA ADSUL:

SHRI ADHALRAO PATIL SHIVAJIRAO:

SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY:

SHRI RAVI PRAKASH VERMA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to invite bidding to establish 300 FM Stations in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that at present only 21 of the 108 FM frequencies put up for bidding are operational;

(d) the steps taken by the Government to make all FM frequencies operational; and

(e) the loss suffered by the Government by way of non-functional of all FM frequencies?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) More than 300 private FM radio channels at 90 locations across the country are envisaged to be set up in Phase II of private FM radio broadcasting.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The unutilized frequencies of Phase I are envisaged to be utilized in Phase II of private FM radio broadcasting.

(e) The revenue realized in the 1st year as license fee for 25 stations at Rs. 11007.50 lakhs was more than the anticipated revenue of Rs. 7540 lakhs from 108 stations.

Revamping of Delhi Airport

6120. SHRI ADHALRAO PATIL SHIVAJIRAO: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the revamping proposal of Delhi Airport has been cleared by the Government as reported in the Hindustan Times dated on April 13, 2005;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof; and

(c) the other steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government for timely completion of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) On the basis of the decision taken by Government in September 2003, the International airports at Delhi/Mumbai are being restructured and modernised through the Joint Venture Route with 'Public Private Participation (PPP). In the Joint Venture Company (JVC), Airports Authority of India (AAI) and other Government PSUs will be holding 26% equity and balance 74% will be held by private sector. The Expression of Interest (EOI) was invited through Global Tender for restructuring and modernisation of Delhi and Mumbai airports. Ten consortia submitted EOIs, out of which nine pre-qualified for Request for Proposal (RFP) Stage. The pre-qualified bidders have been issued the RFP documents on 1.4.2005 to enable them to submit their technical and financial bids.

(c) Adequate provisions in the Transaction Documents, in term of completing mandated facilities by the JVC in first five years and development in subsequent years alongwith attainment of performance standards etc. and penalties for non-adherence to the time-frame are proposed to ensure timely completion of the project.

Low Cost Airfares by Private Airlines

6121. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some domestic airlines are offering low cost airfares equivalent to ordinary class railway fares, in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government owned Indian Airlines also planning to provide such offers;

- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government has any mechanism to monitor the private domestic airlines which provide such offer; and
- (f) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) At present only one airline, viz Air Deccan is operating low-cost-no-frills air services.

(c) and (d) No, Sir.

(e) and (f) After repeal of Air Corporation Act, 1953, domestic fares are not regulated by the Government.

Purchase of Aircraft for Air India

6122. SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Air India has finally decided to purchase 50 aircraft of different types from the US manufacturing company;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the total cost involved in purchase of these aircraft;
- (d) whether any delivery schedule has been worked out; and
- (e) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Board of Directors of Air India Limited has approved the purchase of 8 B777-200 LR, 15 B777-300 ER and 27 B787 Aircraft from Boeing at an estimated cost of approximately Rs.30,700 crores.

(d) and (e) The actual delivery schedule will be finalised after the acquisition proposal of Air India is approved by the Government.

[Translation]

New Types of Petrol Pumps

6123. SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL:

SHRI NIHAL CHAND:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether certain oil companies propose to open new type of petrol pumps in the country where urea, seeds, loans and free consultation would be provided as reported in Dainik Jagran dated April 17, 2005;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the names of the States identified initially to be covered under the proposed scheme; and
- (d) the number of the said petrol pumps likely to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Government have asked public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) to conduct a survey to expand their network to cater to the requirements of the agricultural sector and to develop a business model to meet the petrol/diesel requirements of rural areas, as also to draft an approach paper on how to set up lowcost retail outlets (petrol pumps) replacing the barrel points/unauthorized pumps across the country. In the meantime, Indian Oil Corporation Limited have initiated steps, in terms of their own policy, to set up retail outlets in rural areas under the name 'Kisan Seva Kendra'. They have plans to set up around 1000 such outlets and the State-wise allocation of such outlets will depend on the detailed survey in all States to identify viable potential locations in the rural areas with availability of suitable sites. Besides supplying diesel and other petroleum products, these outlets are proposed to provide for non-oil facilities like the sale of fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, items of daily need like flour, soap, etc. and facilities like banking, internet kiosk, communication facilities, etc.

Other OMCs too have their own plans in this regard with the objective of making available petroleum products and other non-oil items/facilities required by farmers/agricultural consumers. No particular States have been identified for setting up of such outlets, and it is also not possible, at this stage, to indicate the number of such outlets that may be opened by all the OMCs. Setting up such retail outlets will depend, on many factors, including surveys by OMCs to identify viable and potential locations in rural areas, with availability of suitable sites.

[English]

Cadre Restructuring Committee

6124. SHRI BHUPENDRASINH SOLANKI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a Cadre Restructuring Committee

was constituted in January, 2004 in the Ministry of Railways;

(b) if so, whether the said Committee has given its reports;

(c) if so, the salient features of the recommendations made by the Committee; and

(d) the follow-up action taken to implement the recommendations of the Committee?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) A Committee to assess and analyse the justification for the decision taken by the Government for restructuring of the Central Secretariat Service (CSS) to be adopted for the Railway Board Secretariat Service (RBSS) was constituted in Feb.' 2004.

(b) The Committee submitted its report in the month of July' 2004.

(c) The salient features of the recommendations of the committee are as under:

(i) The Cadre Strength of RBSS in various Grades be revised as under:

Designation	Existing	Revised Strength
Sr. Selection Grade/ Director	5	15
Selection Grade/ Jt. Director/Dy. Secy.	26	45
Grade I (Under Secy.)/ Dy. Director	68	124
Section Officers	195	248
Assistants	386	450

(ii) Discontinue recruitment of Section Officers through Civil Services Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Change the mode of recruitment of Section Officers by way of 50% through Limited Departmental Competitive Examination (LDCE) and 50% by seniority.

(iii) Grant of non-functional pay scale of Rs.8000-275-13500 to the Section Officers of RBSS.

(iv) Stoppage of direct recruitment of Lower Division Clerks (LDCs) with immediate effect and abolition of all posts of LDCs as and when these fall vacant.

Consequent upon the reduction in the strength of LDCs, 90% posts in the grade of Upper Division Clerks (UDCs) to be abolished as and when these fall vacant.

(v) Ex-cadre posts of Technical Assistants to be encadred with the existing number of posts of Assistants and creation of new posts of Technical Assistants will be banned.

(d) The cadre strength was been revised as under in consultation with the Department of Personnel & Training (DOP&T) and the Ministry of Finance.

Designation	No. of posts
Sr. Selection Gr./Director	12
Selection Gr./Joint Director/ Dy.Secy.	38
Dy.Directors/ Under Secy.	118
Section Officers/ Desk Officers	276
Assistants	450

All other recommendations of the Committee have also been implemented by an order issued in March, 2005.

Gauge Conversion of Rail Line between Dindigul-Coimbatore

6125. SHRI S. K. KHARVENTHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any demand for conversion of rail line between Dindigul-Palani-Palaghat-Colmbatore into broad gauge is pending with the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) An updating survey for gauge conversion of Dindigul-Pollachi-Colmbatore and Pollachi-Palghat has been completed in January, 2005. As per the survey report, cost of conversion of 225 kms long Metre Gauge line into broad gauge has been assessed as Rs. 289.39 crore. Further decision on the proposal would be taken based on results of the survey once the same is finalized.

[Translation]

Export of Products by PSU's

6126. DR. CHINTA MOHAN:

SHRI NITISH KUMAR:

Will the Minister of HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of public sector undertakings of whose products or services are exported;
- (b) whether it is a fact that only a small percentage of the total business of these enterprises is being exported;
- (c) if not, the facts thereof; and
- (d) the average annual export percentage of the total business done by these enterprises during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (d) The total exports of 89 CPSEs was Rs.33602 crore and the total turnover which indicates the total business of these enterprises was Rs.433478 crore during 2003-04. The percentage of export to total business works out to 7.75%. The average percentage of exports to total average business for 3 years i.e. 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 was 6.63%.

[English]

Recovery of Outstanding Amounts from Airlines

6127. SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether huge amounts of various public sector oil companies are outstanding for recovery from various public and private airlines;
- (b) if so, the details in this regard; Airlines-wise; and
- (c) the steps taken by the oil companies to recover the outstanding amounts from the airlines?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The details of present outstanding amounts against the Public and Private Airlines for supply of aviation turbine fuel by the public sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) are enclosed as statement.

(c) Regarding the dues of Air India & Indian Airlines, OMCs have individually and jointly taken up the matter with the Ministries of Civil Aviation and Finance, and

Air India/Indian Airlines, to settle their outstanding dues which are disputed on account of refund of excise duty claims. Regarding the dues of Vayudoot, after its merger with Indian Airlines and the expiry of the moratorium imposed by the Ministry of Civil Aviation on 31.03.2004, OMCs have requested payment of their outstanding dues in one lump sum instead of annual instalments. Regarding the dues of private domestic/international airlines, OMCs have initiated legal action against the defaulting airlines which have since closed operations in India leaving unpaid dues.

Statement

Outstanding dues against the public and private airlines for supply of aviation turbine fuel by Government Oil Marketing Companies are given below:-

Sl. No.	Name of the Airlines	Outstanding Amount (In Rs./Lakhs)	Total (Rs./Lakhs)
1.	Public Sector Airlines		
i.	Air India*	648.99	
ii.	Indian Airlines*	481.00	
iii.	Vayudoot	800.43	1930.42
2.	Private Domestic/International Airlines		
i.	East West Airlines	283.00	
ii.	NEPC/Skyline NEPC	1843.00	
iii.	Citi Link	51.14	
iv.	Raj Air	37.58	
v.	VIF Airways	1.23	
vi.	Continental Airlines	12.89	
vii.	Air Kazakhstan	12.55	
viii.	Tajikistan International Airlines	50.98	2272.37
Grand Total			4202.79

* Outstanding amount against Air India & Indian Airlines are on account of disputed refund of Excise Duty claims.

Special Tourist Package for Andaman and Nicobar Islands by I.A.

6128. DR. M. JAGANNATH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Indian Airlines has formulated any special tourist package for Andaman and Nicobar Islands;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps being taken to attract the foreign tourists to the Islands?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) Indian Airlines has formulated special tourist package for Andaman & Nicobar Islands called "Andaman Flyaways". The 3 night./ 4 days packages include return airfares in economy class, airport-hotel-airport transfers, room, meals and various sight seeing options. Besides Indian Airlines also offers special fares such as "Fly select fares", 'Apex Fares' which are lower than the existing normal sector fares to promote travel to/from Port Blair. 'Andaman Flyaways' are available for sale at most of the overseas markets on Indian Airlines network.

[Translation]

**Filling up of Vacancies on
Compassionate Grounds**

6129. SHRI RAKESH SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a provision to fill only 5 per cent of the vacancies on compassionate grounds in the ordnance factories as per the existing policy;

(b) if so, whether the Government proposes to increase this percentage keeping in view of the increasing number of people deprived of appointment on compassionate grounds;

(c) if not, whether any scheme is under consideration of the Government to enable the dependents of the deceased to earn their livelihood; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI BJOY HANDIQUE):

(a) The Scheme to grant appointment on compassionate grounds to a dependent family member of a Government servant dying in harness etc. was notified by Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Personnel and Training vide their OM No. 14014/6/94-Estt.(D), dated 9.10.1998. These instructions are also applicable in the ordnance factories. In terms of the said Scheme, compassionate appointments can be made up to a maximum of 5 percent of vacancies falling under direct recruitment quota in any Groups 'C' & 'D' post.

(b) In so far as the ordnance factories are concerned, there is no proposal to increase the percentage to grant compassionate appointments.

(c) No such scheme is under consideration of the Ministry of Defence.

(d) Does not arise.

[English]

Gas Pipeline Project

6130. SHRI IQBAL AHMED SARADGI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether IOC has signed any MoU with Nepal Oil Corporation to set up 35 Km. Gas Pipeline;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the expenditure likely to be incurred thereon; and

(d) the time by which it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) No, Sir. However, an MoU has been signed between Indian Oil Corporation Limited and Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) on 9.9.2004 for laying a Product Pipeline from Raxaul in Bihar to Amlekhganj, Nepal. The estimated cost of the pipeline will be around Rs.33 crore. The construction schedule for the project is 24 months after receipt of all the approvals.

**Financial Assistance for
Chitragupta Temple**

6131. SHRI K. J. S. P. REDDY: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has drawn to the news item captioned "Sole temple for Chitragupta in neglected State" as reported in Deccan Chronicle dated March 4, 2005;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether State Government of Andhra Pradesh has approached the Union Government for any financial help;

(d) if so, the amount granted by the Union Government; and

(e) the steps taken/to be taken to protect the Chitragupta Temple?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The temple is not in a neglected state. The

temple was renovated in 1992 and a 5-member committee looks after the affairs of the temple.

(c) The Archaeological Survey of India has not received any proposal for grant of financial assistance for this temple from the State Government of Andhra Pradesh.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) There is no proposal at present to declare it as a centrally protected monument.

Pension to Artists

6132. SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL:

SHRI ANANDRAC VITHOBA ADSUL:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government provides pension to the persons in the field of Arts;

(b) if so, the criteria fixed to award such pension; and

(c) the number of persons receiving Central Pension for 'Man of Arts' at present, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Under the Scheme of Financial Assistance to persons Distinguished in Letters, Arts and Such other Walks of life who may be indigent circumstances and their dependents, assistance is given in the form of monthly allowance @Rs.2000/- per month under the Central Quota and @Rs.1500/- per month under Centre-State Quota. The objective of the Scheme is to support and sustain old poor artists. Artists and scholars aged 58 years or above who are in indigent circumstances are eligible for the assistance. The artists are recommended for assistance by an Expert Committee constituted for the purpose.

(c) A statement showing number of beneficiaries State-wise is enclosed.

Statement

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Central Quota	State Quota	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1	Andhra Pradesh	68	14	82
2	Assam	7	6	13

1	2	3	4	5
3	Bihar	12		12
4	Chandigarh	2		2
5	Delhi	39		39
6	Goa	7	15	22
7	Gujarat	3		3
8	Haryana	3		4
9	Himachal Pradesh	2		2
10	Karnataka	34	40	74
11	Kerala	36	77	113
12	Madhya Pradesh	14		14
13	Manipur	50	7	57
14	Mizoram	1	2	3
15	Maharashtra	39	11	50
16	Orissa	63	105	168
17	Pondicherry		1	1
18	Punjab		2	2
19	Rajasthan	2	4	6
20	Tamil Nadu	6		6
21	Uttar Pradesh	86	68	154
22	West Bengal	11	5	16
Total		485	358	843

Employment Generating Schemes

6133. SHRI RUPCHAND MURMU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways is planning to launch on employment generating schemes as part of the privatization of certain services in railways;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Railways proposes to give the job of issuing tickets to unemployment educated Youths residing in and around small stations; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

- (b) Does not arise.
- (c) No, Sir.
- (d) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Grants to NGOs on Proportionate Basis

6134. SHRI KRISHNA MURARI MOGHE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether grants to NGOs are provided in proportion to the number of NGOs, population of State and the number of BPL families in a State;

(b) If not, whether the Government proposes to formulate a policy to ensure that the said grant is provided to all the States and NGOs therein on a proportionate basis for the welfare of the destitute and helpless people in the State; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) No, Sir. Grants to NGOs are released under various schemes and programmes on the basis of the proposals received, availability of funds and as per the terms and conditions of the scheme.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

[English]

Contracts for Railway Projects

6135. SHRI SUGRIB SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether RITES Ltd., has been awarded contracts for implementing railway projects in Angola;

(b) If so, the details in this regard;

(c) the details of the terms and conditions of the agreements signed between RITES and Angola;

(d) the details of the various items proposed to be exported to Angola for railway rehabilitation project;

(e) the time by which the said projects is likely to be completed; and

(f) the projects from other countries in pipeline in regard to consultancy and the total consultancy business of RITES abroad during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. RITES have been awarded five contracts by Railway of Mocamedes (CFM Railway), Angola for implementing Railway projects in Angola. Contracts have been entered for the following:

- Technical assistance and supply of equipments
- Supply of coaches and Accident Relief Train
- Supply of Locomotives and Diesel Multiple Units
- Supply of Gang car, Inspection car & Rail cum Road vehicle etc.
- Supply of Buses and Pick up Vans

(c) Terms and conditions of the agreement signed between Angolian Authorities and RITES Ltd. include the following:

- Supply of the equipments and their maintenance during warranty period.
- Training of CFM Railway personnel in India
- Supply of maintenance spares for the equipment supplied
- Technical assistance of Operation, Civil, Mechanical, Signal and Telecom and Personnel Management for a period of 18 months.

(d) Details of various items to be exported to Angola is given below:

- Workshop equipment as Machinery & Plant, Test Benches
- 15 First Class Coaches, 22 Second Class Coaches, Restaurant Car, 2 Luggage Van, 1 Accident Relief Train
- 3 Diesel Locomotive Works made Locomotives
- 2 set Integrated Coach Factory made Diesel Multiple Unit

- 4 Gang Car, 4 Inspection car, 2 Rail-cum-road Vehicles and 2 Chemical Doweeding Vehicles
- 10 Mahindra Bolero Pick up vehicle, 2 Mahindra LX Jeep
- 12 Tata Telcoline crew cab, 3 Tata bus 66 seater
- Maintenance Spares

(e) The duration of the projects is 33 months.

(f) Consultancy projects are currently being pursued in Pakistan, Sudan, Myanmar, Senegal, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania and Nigeria. During the last three years, Rs. 137.8 crore was earned from foreign consultancy.

Railway Infrastructure Corporation

6136. SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways have received any proposal from the Government of Kerala for setting up of a Railway Infrastructure Corporation as a joint venture with the State Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Railways thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Formation of a Railway Infrastructure Corporation for Kerala was one of the suggestions contained in the Memorandum submitted by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala for Railway Budget 2005-06. However, no formal proposal has been received in this regard.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Waiver of Sales Tax

6137. SHRI SUBODH MOHITE: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether some Airlines have requested for waiver of State Sales Tax on the uneconomic routes;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) the reaction of the State Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) The ATF costs constitute around 30% of the operating costs of the

airlines in India as against the industry average of 10 to 15% in rest of the world. One of the major factors for high ATF costs is high incidence of sales tax thereon, i.e. around 25% on an average. To reduce the high ATF costs, a proposal has been mooted to notify ATF/AVGAS as 'declared goods' under the Central Sales Tax Act so as to cap the rate of sales tax @ 4%. This proposal has been accepted in respect of turbo prop aircraft, which are normally operated on short sector routes. However, the proposal of extending this facility to other kind of aircraft has not been accepted in view of the serious revenue implications for the State Governments.

Railway Hospitals

6138. SHRI G.V. HARSHA KUMAR : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has held that the services rendered by the Railway hospitals in the country would come within the purview of consumer courts;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Though medical treatment in Railway Hospitals is provided free of cost to railway medical beneficiaries, the cost of medical care in Railway Hospitals is borne by the Railway administration as a part of service conditions. Hence the services rendered by railway hospitals/ health units are covered within the parameters laid down in the para 56(12) of the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in V.P. Shanta's case and as further affirmed in judgement in SLP (C) No. 4994 of 2004. Hence railway hospitals/ health units are covered under Consumer Protection Act.

(c) Indian Railways are adhering to Hon'ble Court's judgement.

[Translation]

ROB/RUB

6139. SHRI BRAJESH PATHAK:

SHRI RANEN BARMAN:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of ROB /RUB and fly overs which are under construction in different parts of the country;

(b) the details of the proposals sent by various

State Governments including Uttar Pradesh for construction of over bridges/under bridges on railway level crossings;

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon;

(d) the amount allocated for construction of such bridges during the last three years; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government for timely completion of these over bridges/under bridges?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) A Statement is attached.

(d) Amount allocated to these works during last three years:

2002-03	-	Rs.325 crore
2003-04	-	Rs.313 crore
2004-05	-	Rs.251 crore

(e) Railways construct bridge proper (across tracks) only and approaches work is executed by the Road Authorities concerned. Completion of bridge depends upon completion of approaches. Railways make all out efforts to complete their portion of work simultaneously with the work of approaches executed by State Government concerned.

Statement

(a) At present there are 405 works of Road over/under bridges under construction in different parts of the Country. Railway zone-wise number of over/under bridges are as under:

Central	- 13	East Central	- 46
Eastern	- 37	East Coast	- 14
Northern	- 42	North Central	- 6
North Eastern	- 11	North Western	- 7
Northeast Frontier	- 6	Southeast Central	- 6
Southern	- 93	South Western	- 38
South Central	- 42	West Central	- 5
South Eastern	- 23		
Western	- 16		

In addition 23 new works falling on different Zones have also been included in the Railway Budget of 2005-06.

(b) and (c) Proposals for construction of Road over/under bridges are sponsored by State Governments duly fulfilling certain preliminary pre-requisites required under extant rules. There are various stages of submission, discussion & examination of the proposals, some of which remain tentative from the various State Governments. These are at Divisional level, Zonal Railway Headquarters' level and Ministry level. Therefore, the exact number of proposals under various stages is always fluctuating and difficult to access. The proposals complete in all respects so received are examined and after scrutiny those found feasible are approved for inclusion in Works Programmes.. As far as Uttar Pradesh is concerned only one complete & feasible proposal duly recommended by the Zonal Railway was received by the Ministry and approved for inclusion in the Works Programme of 2005-06 at the time of its preparation & finalization.

Security to Bus Service

6140. SHRI SAJJAN KUMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the arrangements made by the Army for the security of passengers and regularise the bus service in view of the threat by terrorists to disrupt the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service;

(b) whether the Government is satisfied with the arrangements made for regularisation of the bus service and security of passengers; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) The overall responsibility of providing security to the bus service and the passengers is of the J&K State Government. The Army assists the State Government by virtue of its deployment for counter insurgency operations. The Army is providing security to the bus along the National Highway 1A and near the Line of Control. The arrangements are being coordinated by the Army under the aegis of the Unified Headquarters.

[English]

Permission for Additional Flights to Foreign Airlines

6141. SHRI G. KARUNAKARA REDDY:

SHRI P. S. GADHAVI :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has given permission to private airlines to operate internationally;

(b) if so, whether the foreign airlines permitted to operate additional flights to India;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Indian airports are ready and fully equipped to handle extra air traffic; and

(e) if not, the reasons for giving permission to foreign airlines for operating additional flights without upgrading the Indian airports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. Private Scheduled airlines of India having 5 years of continuous operations in the domestic sector and a minimum fleet size of 20 aircraft have been permitted to operate on all international routes except UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

(b) and (c) Traffic rights for operation of international air services to/from India are reviewed from time to time as part of an on-going process depending on balance of benefit to our carriers, traffic demand, overall benefit to national economy, political/diplomatic considerations etc. As part of this on-going process, bilateral talks have recently been held with various countries and additional entitlements granted to their airlines. Actual operations are however ultimately guided by commercial judgement of the airlines and traffic demand.

(d) and (e) Upgradation/expansion/development of airports is a continuous process and is undertaken depending upon traffic potential and requirement from airline operators. Several measures are presently at hand to provide additional capacity/reduce congestion at various international airports.

Renovation of Monuments in Orissa

6142. SHRI ANANTA NAYAK: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the temples/monuments proposed to be renovated in Orissa during 2005-06, monument-wise; and

(b) the amount allocated for renovation of those monuments, monument-wise?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) Details of amount allocated for the temples/monuments of Orissa alongwith their conservation programme for 2005-2006 is enclosed as statement.

Statement

Sl. No.	Name of Monument with Locality and District	Proposed Division for 2005-06 (approx.) in lakhs
1	2	3
1.	Lord Jagannath Temple at Puri	66.00
2.	Mahakal Temple at Jajpur, Ratnagiri Distt.	3.68
3.	Sun Temple Konark Distt. Puri	74.73
4.	Megheswar Temple, Bhubaneswar	8.46
5.	Churangadafort Dadhipatana, Cuttack	9.70
6.	Hatigumpha Caves at Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar	2.50
7.	Ashokan rock edict, Dhauri, Bhubaneswar	2.00
8.	Group of Temple, Kottakola Dist., Ganjam	5.30
9.	Churungarh Fort, Dadhipatana, Ct	1.00
10.	Kedarswar Temple, Choudwar, Chudwar Cuttack	14.00
11.	Raisikray Temple, Haripurgarh, Baripada, Distt.	1.10
12.	Barabati Fort, Cuttack	12.00
13.	Trilochaneswar Temple, Jajpur	6.00
14.	Panchupandava Temple, Ganeswarpur, Cuttack	5.00
15.	Sub Shrines of group of Temple, Baudh	5.00
16.	Nilamadha and Sidheswar Temple, Gandharadi, Baudh	7.00
17.	Lord Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar	10.00
18.	Papanasini Tank, Bhubaneswar	10.00
19.	Chandrasekhar Jew Temple, Dhenkanal	10.00
20.	Excavated site at Lalteigiri, Jajpur	15.10

1	2	3
21.	64 Yogini at Hirapur, Bhubneswar	2.60
22.	Excavated site at Udyagiri, Jajpur	26.00
23.	Boudh Orissa	5.20
24.	Varahi Temple at Churasl	6.00
25.	Excavated site at Ratnagiri	5.00
26.	Ashokan rock edict, Jaugada, Distt. Ganjam	10.00
27.	Khanagiri and Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar	3.00
28.	Meghananda Prachir, Bhubaneswar	5.00
29.	Chitrakarani Temple, Bhubaneswar	5.00
30.	Rajarani Temple, Bhubaneswar	3.00
31.	Jambeswar Temple, Bhubaneswar	3.00
32.	Kedarswar Temple, Choudwar	5.00
33.	Jagannath Temple, Jajpur	5.00
34.	Kanekeswar Temple at Kual Dhenkanal	10.00
35.	Varahanath Temple, Jajpur	5.00
36.	Bringeswar Temple Site, Bazrakot, Dlkst. Angul	6.00
37.	Panchapandav Temple, Ganeswarpur, Distt. Jajpur	6.00
38.	Ashokan Edict at Dhauli, Bhubaneshwar, Distt. Khurda	2.00
39.	Rameswar Temple Garden, Bhubaneswar, Distt., Khurda	2.00
40.	Rajarani Temple Garden, Bhubaneswar, Distt. Khurda	4.00
41.	Mukteswar Temple Garden, Bhubaneswar, Distt., Jajpur	4.00
42.	Ramasita, Sivakali, Kashi Biswanath, Chandeswar, Biswakarma, Ramalingeswar, Ladukeshwar, Lavaneshwar Temple in LLT, Bhubaneswar	0.95

1	2	3
43.	Twin Temples of Nilamadhab & Sidheswar, Gandharadi, Boudh	5.00
44.	Jagmohan, Bhogmandap & Natmandap of Lord Lingaraj Temple, BBSR	9.60
45.	Ekadasi Mahadev Temple, Sidheswar Temple, Agneswar Temple, Aisaneswar Temple & Beheran Mandap in Lord Lingaraj Temple complex, BBSR	2.00
46.	Barahi Temple, Chaurasi	3.00

Reservation of Seats for SCs/STs and Women in Nagaland Municipalities & Panchayats

6143. SHRI RAVI PRAKASH VERMA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Article 243T of the Constitution of India provides reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women in Municipalities and Panchayats;

(b) if so, whether the Nagaland Government failed to carry out the provision of the Constitution of India to provide any reservation of seats for women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Municipalities and Panchayats;

(c) if so, the reaction of the Union Government thereto; and

(d) the instructions/directions issued by the Union Government to Government of Nagaland in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Article 243 T of the Constitution provides for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) in every municipality in proportion to their population and not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats for women that are required to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a municipality. This Article is not applicable to Panchayats.

(b) As per Article 243 M(2), Part IX of the Constitution relating to Panchayats is not applicable to the State of Nagaland. In respect of Municipalities, the Ministry of Urban Development have stated that the Government of Nagaland have informed that Ministry that the State

Municipal Act has no provision for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as the State is predominantly populated by Scheduled Tribes and no Scheduled Caste has been notified in the State. There is also no provision for reservation of seats for women in the State Municipal Act.

(c) and (d) The Ministry of Urban Development have stated that since the provisions of Article 243T of the Constitution are mandatory, the State Government has been asked vide Ministry's letter dated 25th April, 2005 to take necessary action for the implementation of this provision.

[Translation]

**Financial Assistance to Voluntary
Cultural Organisations**

6144. SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the norms laid down for providing financial assistance to the Voluntary Cultural Organisation under the 'Scheme of Financial Assistance towards Building and Equipment Grant'; and

(b) the details and amount of financial assistance provided under the scheme to the Voluntary Cultural Organisations in Rajasthan during each of the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Ministry of Culture runs a Scheme for Building and Equipment Grants to Voluntary Cultural Organisations. Under this scheme voluntary cultural organisations primarily working in the fields of dance, drama, music, fine arts, Indology and literature are eligible for financial assistance for construction of buildings and or purchase of equipments.

Such organizations must have been functioning for at least five years and registered at least for a period of two years under the registration of Societies Act (XXI) of 1860 for similar Acts. An organisation must be of regional or all -India character. Its work must be substantially devoted to programmes that deal with preservation, propagation and promotion of Indian culture.

The maximum assistance admissible to an organisation will be 50 percent of the expenditure subject to a maximum of Rs.15 lakh for the construction of building. The quantum of assistance does not exceed 50 percent of the estimated cost of the project. The quantum of assistance for equipments shall not exceed Rs.2.5 lakh.

The applications under the schemes are to be routed through the State Government/ Union Territory concerned and are considered by an Expert Committee constituted by the Ministry of Culture.

(b) The details and amounts of financial assistance provided to the Voluntary Organisations in Rajasthan during the last three years are as under:

Year	No. of Organisation	Amount Approved
2002-03	4 nos.	Rs.23,50,000/-
2003-04	2 nos.	Rs.14,00,000/-
2004-05	8 nos.	Rs.34,00,000/-

[English]

**Guidelines For Child
Adoption Homes**

6145. SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria adopted or guidelines issued to State Governments for child adoption homes;

(b) whether there are large number of illegal child adoption homes in the country particularly in Southern States;

(c) if so, the number of such homes come to the notice of the Government, engaged in illegal sale purchase of infants;

(d) whether the Government has framed any code on the rights of child with the help of UNICEF;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether this code on the rights of child has been adopted by all the State Governments; and

(g) if so, the details thereof and the further measures taken or being taken by the Government for the protection of infants from sale purchase?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) The Guidelines for In-country Adoption, 2004 in its annexure-IV prescribe the minimum standards that each adoption agency has to maintain regarding quality child care in their homes. These guidelines have been circulated to State Governments for effective implementation and monitoring.

(b) Government of India had received reports on some cases from the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

(c) Two.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

(f) and (g) Although no code has been framed with the help of UNICEF, the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 which had been earlier under implementation in the country was replaced by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000. The responsibility of the implementation of the Act lies with the State Governments/UT Administrations. The Act provides for proper care and protection and treatment of children in need of care and protection including those vulnerable to trafficking. Additionally, the State Governments are requested periodically to ensure that malpractices and irregularities in adoption including sale of children for monetary considering are removed.

Licences for D.T.H. Transmission to Private Players

6146. SHRI M. K. SUBBA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has decided to open up Doordarshan's Direct To Home (DTH) transmission to private players;

(b) if so, the detailed guidelines issued in this regard;

(c) the details of private players who have applied for licenses for DTH transmission of Doordarshan; and

(d) the decision taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) There is no provision for licenses for DTH transmission of Doordarshan. However, the Government has issued guidelines for obtaining license for providing Direct-to-Home (DTH) broadcasting service in India.

Exploratory Wells in Mahanadi

6147. SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has awarded on shore and offshore exploratory wells in Mahanadi plateau to various public and private sector oil companies;

(b) if so, the details in the regard;

(c) the number of exploratory wells so far drilled in the offshore and on shore blocks;

(d) whether in view of geological considerations for all the areas of Orissa, any exploratory efforts has been made;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the achievements made in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (f) In the Mahanadi basin, Government of India have signed Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) under 4 Rounds of the New Exploration Licensing Policy for one onland block, namely, MN-ONN-2000/1 operated by Oil India Ltd. consortium and seven offshore blocks, namely, MN-OSN-97/3, MN-DWN-98/3, MN-OSN-2000/1, MN-OSN-2000/2, MN-DWN-2002/1, MN-DWN-2002/2 and NEC-DWN-2002/2 operated by an ONGC consortium. In addition, 3 exploration blocks namely, MN-DWN-98/2, NEC-OSN-92/2 and NEC-DWN-2002/1, have been awarded to the Reliance Industries Ltd. consortium and one exploration block, NEC-OSN-92/1 to the OAO GAZPROM consortium. In the fifth round of NELP, one deep water block, MN-DWN-2003/1, has been offered for competitive international bidding. The bid closing date is 31 May 2005.

OIL had drilled 11 exploratory wells in Mahanadi offshore and 4 wells in onland areas with no significant hydrocarbon finds. Under NELP 18,877 Line Kilometers (LKM) of 2D seismic and 7242 Sq. kilometer of 3D seismic data have been acquired. In block, NEC-OSN-97/2, six exploratory wells have been drilled by RIL, and have resulted in six gas discoveries.

Menace of Vendors/Hawkers/Beggars in Trains

6148. DR. M. JAGANNATH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that the passengers are facing great problems due to the activities of on-board vendors/hawkers and beggars in running trains; and

(b) if so, the preventive measures taken or being taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Some cases of passengers facing problems due to the activities of vendors/hawkers & beggars in trains do come to notice. With a view to ensure comfortable journey to the bonafide passengers, regular drives are conducted in association with the Police against unauthorised vendors/hawkers and beggars in trains and action against the persons so apprehended is taken as per the relevant provisions of law.

Academy for Civil Aviation Security

6149. SHRI IQBAL AHMED SARADGI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a specialized Academy for Civil Aviation Security to train personnel for civil aviation has been set up in New Delhi;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the other steps being taken by the Government to improve the security at all the airports in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

- (b) Does not arise.
- (c) As a part of ongoing process to improve security arrangements at airports the Government has taken following steps:-
 - (i) Time bound deployment of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at all operational airports in the country.
 - (ii) Deployment of Quick Reaction Teams at major airports.
 - (iii) Deployment of Sky Marshals on board.
 - (iv) Regular monitoring of security arrangement through inspections and dummy checks.
 - (v) Installation of Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTVs) at important airports.
 - (vi) Strengthening of Training of security personnel. A National Civil Aviation Training Programme has also been formulated.

Import of Coaches

6150. SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Railways has imported coaches from Alstom; LHB;
- (b) if so, the details in this regard;
- (c) whether the Railways have made trial of such coaches on Indian Tracks before procurement of such coaches;
- (d) if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Railways to avoid recurrence of such lapses in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 24 Nos. of All Metal Light Weight High Speed coaches have been imported from M/s ALSTOM – LHB, Germany. Foreign Exchange spent on import of these 24 coaches was Deutsche Marks 52,663,000 (Rs. 106 crore approx.)

(c) and (d) No, Sir. Trials of coaches on Indian Tracks before procurement was not possible without their physical receipt in India. However, before placement of order, the offer of M/s ALSTOM, LHB was technically scrutinized and found to be state-of-the-art technology and also conforming to Indian Railway's laid down technical specifications.

(e) There is no lapse.

[Translation]

Rail Sleeper Manufacturing Depot

6151. SHRI BRAJESH PATHAK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is contemplating to open a rail sleeper manufacturing depot and Ballast manufacturing depot at Kathua and Manwal respectively; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A tender for procurement of Broad Gauge Mono-block Concrete Sleepers for the year 2005-06 and 2006-07 floated by the Railway Board has been opened on 14-3-2005. The tender provides for setting up 10 new concrete sleeper plants in six Zonal Railways viz. East-Central Railway, Northern Railway, North-Eastern Railway, Northeast Frontier Railway, Southern Railway and South Western Railway. Kathua under Northern Railway is one

of above mentioned 10 identified locations. Tender is under consideration.

As regard to Ballast manufacturing depot at Manwal- An Engineering siding has been made at the newly opened Manwal station. This siding is utilized for various Engineering material, including mega Ballast Depot for requirement of material in the section.

Gas in Krishna Godavari Basin

6152. SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has approved any investment plan for development of gas found in the Krishna-Godavari basin, off the east coast;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) the number of fields in Krishna-Godavari basin so far declared commercial; and

(d) the time by which production will be started?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) have approved a development plan for G-1 & GS-15 recoveries in the Krishna-Godavari basin. Completion is scheduled for April 2006 at an approved cost of Rs. 1262.93 crore. In addition, M/s. Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) have submitted a development plan for two discoveries, namely, Dhirubhai-1 and 3 with a investment of US\$ 2.47 billion, the development proposal plan has also been approved by The Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). Gas production by RIL is likely to start from August, 2008, as estimated by the operator. Out of 14 discoveries made by private / JV companies, 2 discoveries have been approved and declared to be commercial. The remaining discoveries are under appraisal.

As on 1.4.2005, 24 fields (7 oil and 17 gas) are on commercial production in the Krishna Godavari onshore and offshore basin. Two of these producing fields fall in the offshore area. In addition to these 24 producing fields, G-1 field is likely to be put on production during 2006-07 after integrated development with GS-15.

[Translation]

Demand of Kerosene

6153. SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL:

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has not been able to meet the demand of kerosene being supplied through P.D.S. with indigenous production as a result of which the Indian Oil Corporation has issued tenders for import of one lakh 35 thousand tonnes of kerosene in the month of April;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the IOC has made a demand to ban the export of jet karo and Aviation Turbine Fuel (A.T.F.) resembling kerosene to that the shortage of kerosene being demanded under PDS could be met;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) No Sir, not in the current year. In order to meet the shortfall in indigenous production, in April, 2005, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOC) finalized three tenders for the import of around 2,15,000 metric tonnes (MT) of Kerosene.

(c) to (e) With a view to ensuring that the country's demand for kerosene for PDS is met from indigenous production, IOC have requested the Government to consider imposing restrictions on the export of Jet-kero and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF). The matter is under consideration of the Government.

[English]

Category of Persons Eligible to Fly Free

6154. SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Air India and Indian Airlines are incurring heavy expenditure on the category of persons eligible to fly free in their flights;

(b) if so, the details of the categories of persons eligible to fly free in both the airlines and total expenditure incurred/loss suffered by both the airlines during the last three years;

(c) whether the Government proposes to review the categories of persons eligible to fly free keeping in view the changed scenario in the aviation sector;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken or being taken by the Government to reduce the revenue loss on this account?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL) : (a) and (b) Air India and Indian Airlines issue free/ concessional air passage to their eligible employees and their family members on sector operated by them in terms of their conditions of services. As per industry practice, free/ complimentary tickets are normally issued by Airlines in their commercial interests to tour promoters, travel writers, media personnel, important commercial contacts and prominent personalities to encourage and promote travel in their flights and to help in image building of the Company. However, no expenditure is incurred by both the airlines for the grant of free passages as these passages are issued on 'Subject to load' basis.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) Do not arise.

National Institute for empowerment of persons with multiple disabilities

6155. SHRI S. K. KHARVENTHAN: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to set up National Institute for empowerment of persons with multiple disabilities;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which it is likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Government has approved setting up of the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities at Chennai to undertake development of human resources management, training, rehabilitation education employment and social development and to promote and conduct research in the areas relating to multiple disabilities and to develop transdisciplinary models and strategies for social rehabilitation to meet the needs of target group. The Ministry has released initially Rs. 1.00 crore for the purpose of setting up the Institute in the financial year 2004-05.

(c) Service delivery to persons with multiple disabilities & diploma & certificate courses will be started within this year.

[Translation]

Automatic System Scheme

6156. SHRI RAKESH SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme under consideration to adopt automatic system for gun powder filling and fabrication work in the ordnance factory, Khamaria and Gun Carriage factory located in Jabalpur;

(b) if so, the time by which the said scheme is likely to be implemented; and

(c) if not, whether the Government proposes to remove the hazards the employees have to face while doing these works manually?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE): (a) Yes, Sir. There is a scheme at Ordnance Factory, Khamaria to adopt automatic system for gun powder filling. The Gun Carriage Factory, Jabalpur (GCF) is not involved in gunpowder filling operations. Fabrication work carried out at GCF is not hazardous and as such there is no plan for introduction of automatic fabrication plant at GCF, Jabalpur.

(b) One Automatic Plant is already in operation and one more is likely to be installed in 2007-2008 at Ordnance Factory, Khamaria.

(c) Does not arise.

[English]

Financial Requirements for Railways Projects

6157. SHRI RAVI PRAKASH VERMA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railway had constituted an Expert Group to study the financial requirements for Railway projects;

(b) if so, whether the said Group has submitted its report;

(c) if so, the recommendations made by the Expert Group; and

(d) the present status regarding implementation of these recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Manufacturing of Supersonic fighter Aircraft

6158. SHRI ADHALRAO PATIL SHIVAJIRAO:

SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that China and Pakistan are jointly manufacturing FC-single engine supersonic fighter aircraft;

(b) If so, whether the pace of manufacturing single engine supersonic fighter aircraft by India is very slow as compared to the China and Pakistan;

(c) If so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to accelerate the production of supersonic fighter aircraft?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) According to Chinese Media reports, China and Pakistan are jointly developing China's new generation fighter plane Xiaolong/FC-I (or Fierce Dragon).

(b) A Supersonic single engine fighter aircraft is being developed by India, using state-of-the-art advanced technologies. Development of these technologies/aircraft is a complex process and takes considerable time. The programme is progressing satisfactorily.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Permission for use of Officers Club Premises

6159. SHRI SUNIL KHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether C&AG in its Report No.8 of 2004 (Railways) has observed that Railway land costing Rs. 7.06 crore earmarked for Club House for the use of Railway Officers' has been allowed to be used free of charge by a Contractor appointed by the Managing Committee of the Club in gross violations of the Rules;

(b) If so, the facts in this regard; and

(c) the corrective steps taken to check recurrence of such cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) It is true that a contract with private individual for 20 years was entered into by the Managing Committee of Railway Club, but it is not true that its usage was free of charge.

(b) The contract permitted the contractor the discretion to decide the rates to be charged by him for the private function for non-members, whereas Club was to get only a paltry sum as a rental along with facility of subsidized food items, for club members and officers at rest house. Since the contract was overwhelmingly in favour of the contractor, an investigation was carried out in the matter.

(c) As a consequence of the investigation;

(i) Notice for termination of the contract with the contractor was issued.

(ii) Administration revoked permission for use of Railway Bungalow as Officers' Club.

(iii) Railway Estate officer took possession of Bungalow No.19 which was being used as Club.

(iv) Two officers were issued major penalty charge-sheet and one Senior Administrative Grade Officer was issued minor penalty charge sheet for the lapses in the matter.

Hydrogen Powered Vehicle

6160. SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has a proposal for unveiling prototype of hydrogen powered vehicle shortly;

(b) If so, the details thereof; and

(c) the effect of this prototype vehicle on the consumption system of fuel in future?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Under instructions of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) have framed a proposal to take up demonstration projects using hydrogen-blended Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) in automotive vehicles. The demonstration projects in the pipeline include using 10% Hydrogen in (CNG) at the Indian Oil Corporation Research & Development Centre at Faridabad (planned for July 2005), and a similar demonstration project later in Delhi. The Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources have stated that they had supported an R&D project at Banaras Hindu University which has resulted in the development and demonstration of a Hydrogen powered motorcycle (100 cc 4-Stroke engines). That Ministry also supported another R&D project in which a fuel cell-based van utilizing indigenously developed 10KW Polymer Electrolyte Membrane fuel cell has been demonstrated by SPIC Science Foundation, Chennai.

(c) Prototype vehicles are used for research and development purposes. The effect of hydrogen-powered vehicles on the consumption of fuels in the future in Indian road conditions can be judged only after sufficient data are generated.

**Construction of buildings by
China along border**

6161. SHRI MOHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has constructed double storey- buildings along the Arunachal Pradesh Border overlooking Tawang and Lohit districts;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard;

(c) whether international posts are being sent across through Point 4545 of Meera Pass to Nathula Pass between India and China; and

(d) if so, the facts thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) China has a few double storey buildings along the Arunachal Pradesh border opposite the Tawang Sector. The Chinese may have constructed these buildings to house their troops deployed on the eastern frontier. They do not overlook the border.

(c) and (d) International mail (posts) are being exchanged at Nathula Pass only.

Rani Damyanti Fort

6162. SHRI CHANDRABHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Rani Damyanti Fort and Narsingh Garh Fort in Madhya Pradesh are centrally protected monuments;

(b) if so, the expenditure incurred on maintenance of these monuments during each of the last three years; and

(c) if not, whether the Government would consider to declare these monuments as protected monuments and develop as tourist spots?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (c) No, Sir. However, a Preliminary notification in respect of Narsingh Garh Fort to declare it as a monument of national importance has been published in the Official Gazette of India vide S.O. No. 273(E) dated 1.3.2005.

As regards Rani Damyanti Fort there is no proposal at present to declare it as a protected monument.

12.00 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

[English]

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following papers (Hindi and English versions):-

- (1) Memorandum of Understanding between the Goa Shipyard Limited and the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2057/05]

- (2) Memorandum of Understanding between the Bharat Earth Movers Limited and the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2058/05]

- (3) Memorandum of Understanding between the Bharat Electronics Limited and the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2059/05]

- (4) Memorandum of Understanding between the Bharat Dynamics Limited and the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2060/05]

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): I beg to lay on the Table:-

- (1) A copy of the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Annual Report of the Corporation Rules, 2004 (Hindi and English versions) published in Notification No. G.S.R. 173 in Gazette of India dated the 22nd May, 2004 under section 34 of the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990.
- (2) Statement (Hindi and English versions) showing reasons for delay in laying the papers mentioned at (1) above.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2061/05]

- (3) A copy of the Annual Report (Hindi and English versions) of the Press Council of India, New Delhi, for the year 2003-2004., along with Audited Accounts.
- (4) Statement (Hindi and English versions) showing reasons for delay in laying the papers mentioned at (3) above.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2062/05]

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following papers (Hindi and English versions):-

- (1) Memorandum of Understanding between the Balmer Lawrie and Company Limited and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2063/05]

- (2) Memorandum of Understanding between the Engineers India Limited and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2064/05]

- (3) Memorandum of Understanding between the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2065/05]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): I beg to lay on the Table:-

- (1) A copy each of the following papers (Hindi and English versions) under sub-section (1) of section 619 A of the Companies Act, 1956:-
 - (a) (i) Statement regarding Review by the Government of the working of the Nepa Limited, Nepanagar, for the year 2003-2004,
 - (ii) Annual Report of the Nepa Limited, Nepanagar, for the year 2003-2004. along with Audited Accounts and comments of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2066/05]

- (b) (i) Statement regarding Review by the Government of the working of the National Instruments Limited, Kolkata, for the year 2003-2004.

- (ii) Annual Report of the National Instruments Limited, Kolkata, for the year 2003-2004, along with Audited Accounts and comments of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.

- (2) Two statements (Hindi and English versions) showing reasons for delay in laying the papers mentioned at (1) above.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2067/05]

- (3) A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (Hindi and English versions) between the Rajasthan Electronics and Instruments Limited and the Department of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2068/05]

- (4) A copy of the Report (Hindi and English versions) of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India-Union Government (Commercial) (No. 4 of 2005) – Public Sector Undertakings - Review on some of the activities of selected PSUs for the year ended the March, 2004, under article 151 (1) of the Constitution.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2069/05]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): I beg to lay on the Table:-

- (1) A copy of the Railway Claims Tribunal (Procedure) Amendment Rules, 2005 (Hindi and English versions) published in Notification No. G.S.R. 173 (E) in Gazette of India dated the 16th March, 2005, under sub-section (3) of section 30 of the Railway Claims Tribunal Act, 1987.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2070/05]

- (2) A copy each of the following papers (Hindi and English versions):-

- (i) Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Railway Finance Corporation Limited and the Ministry of Railways for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2071/05]

- (ii) Memorandum of Understanding between the Container Corporation of India Limited and the Ministry of Railways for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2072/05]

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MEIRA KUMAR): On behalf of Shrimati Subbulakshmi Jagadeesan, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (Hindi and English versions) between the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the year 2005-2006.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT 2073/05]

12.01 hrs.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY

One Hundred Sixty first to One Hundred Seventy First Reports

[Translation]

SHRI KISHANBHAI V. PATEL (Bulsar): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following Reports (Hindi and English versions) of Standing Committee on Industry.

- (1) 161st report on Action Taken by the Government on recommendations contained in the Committee's 132nd report on MoU performance in respect of select Public Sector Undertakings;
- (2) 162nd report on Action Taken by the Government on recommendations contained in the Committee's 146th report on Credit Flow to SSI Sector in Maharashtra;
- (3) 163rd report on Action Taken by the Government on recommendations contained in the committee's 147th report on Credit Flow to SSI Sector in the region of Bulandshahar;
- (4) 164th Report on Action Taken by the Government on recommendations contained in the Committee's 150th report on Demands for Grants (2004-05) pertaining to Department of Public Enterprises (Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises);
- (5) 165th report on Action Taken by the Govern-

ment on recommendations contained in the Committee's 151st report on Demands for Grants (2004-05) pertaining to Department of Heavy Industry (Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises);

- (6) 166th report on Action Taken by the Government on recommendations contained in the Committee's 152nd report on Demands for Grants (2004-05) pertaining to Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries;
- (7) 167th report on Action Taken by the Government on recommendations contained in the Committee's 153rd report on Demands for Grants (2004-05) pertaining to Ministry of Small Scale Industries;
- (8) 168th report on Demands for Grants (2005-06) of the Department of Public Enterprises;
- (9) 169th report on Demands for Grants (2005-06) of the Department of Heavy Industries;
- (10) 170th report on Demands for Grants (2005-06) of the Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries; and
- (11) 171st report on Demands for Grants (2005-06) of the Ministry of Small Scale Industries.

12.02 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Status of implementation of recommendations contained in the First Report of the Standing Committee on Defence*

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Sir, I am making this statement on the status of implementation of recommendations contained in the First Report of the Standing Committee on Defence (14th Lok Sabha) in pursuance of the Direction 73A of the hon. Speaker, Lok Sabha vide Lok Sabha Bulletin — Part II dated September 01, 2004.

The First Report of the Standing Committee on Defence (14th Lok Sabha) was presented to the Lok Sabha on 19.8.2004. The Report relates to the examination of Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Defence for the year 2004-05.

Action Taken Statements on the recommendations/

* Also placed in Library See No. LT 2074/05

observations contained in the Report of the Committee had been sent to the Standing Committee on Defence on 17.1.2005.

There are 28 recommendations made by the Committee in the said Report where action is called for on the part of the Government. These recommendations mainly pertain to the issues like augmentation of Budgetary resources, setting up of non-lapsable Defence Modernisation Fund, long-term strategic planning for our Defence needs, streamlining of Defence Procurement Procedure, training, pension related issues, acquiring best

available machines and equipments for Defence forces, modernisation of Defence Public Sector Undertakings and Ordnance Factories, development of advanced avionics and missile systems, setting up of National Defence University, construction of National War Memorial etc.

The present status of implementation of the various recommendations made by the Committee is indicated in the Annexure to my Statement which is laid on the Table of the House. I would not like to take the valuable time of the House to read out all the contents of this Annexure. I would request that this may be considered as read.

ANNEXURE

*Implementation status of recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Defence (14th Lok Sabha) in their First Report**

Sl. No.	Recommendations	Para Nos.	Status of implementation
1	2	3	4
1.	Ministry to assess the situation in the light of likely impact of reduced allocations on the new schemes and on going acquisition proposals and approach the Ministry of Finance for supplementary allocations at the earliest to ensure that the modernization plans and procurement of essential equipments do not suffer or get delayed merely because of squeezing of funds.	33	The allocation for defence has been increased to Rs.77,000 crore, as against Rs. 65,300 crore in BE 2003-04 which includes an allocation for capital expenditure of Rs. 33,483 crore as against Rs. 20,953 crore in BE 2003-04.
2.	To set up the Defence Modernisation Fund with committed allocation for a period of five years.	43	The utility of Defence Modernisation Fund in addressing the issue of assured availability of funds will be rather limited and hence the proposal is not being pursued further.
3.	The matter regarding finalization of the Tenth Defence Plan to be taken up with the Ministry of Finance.	51	The Ministry has energetically pursued the allocation of funds for defence in the Tenth Plan with the Ministry of Finance. Ministry of Finance have now agreed in principle to the latest projections made by the Ministry of Defence of Rs. 418101 crores. However, a firm indication of annual outlays for the remaining two years of the 10th Plan has not yet been given by the Ministry of Finance.
4.	Prepare a 15 year road map with long-term strategic vision and apprise the Committee of the progress made in this regard within three months.	52	A draft Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) covering the 15 year period from the Tenth to the Twelfth Plan (2002-2017) was formulated in June 2004. A revised Plan is expected to be finalized by the Integrated Defence Staff by the last quarter of 2005.
5.	Constitute a Study Group to examine defence procurement procedures and structures.	57	Defence Procurement Procedure is presently under review in the Ministry to make it more streamlined, transparent and effective.

*Laid on the Table of the House.

1	2	3	4
6.	Ministry to take a view urgently on the recommendations of the Group of Ministers for establishment of the Chief of Defence Staff	62	A decision on the institution of a CDS has not yet been taken in view of the complexities and sensitivities involved. However, pending a decision on the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), an Integrated Defence Staff has been set up under the Chief of Integrated Staff to the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC)
7.	Construction of a National War Memorial and National War Museum	67	The Cabinet Secretariat is being requested to constitute an Inter-Ministerial High Level Committee to identify and allot suitable land for construction of National War Memorial and National War Museum.
8.	Setting up of an Indian National Defence University	72-74	The various recommendations given by the Committee on the National Defence University (CONDU) are under examination in the Government and a detailed project report to this effect is under preparation
9.	To arrest the slide in the Officers cadre in the Army	82	A Committee was set up in the Ministry of Defence to examine this issue. The implementation of the recommendations relating to the time-based promotions in non-select ranks has been completed. The remaining recommendations are under the consideration of the Government.
10.	Period of Short Service Commission should be raised from 5 to 10 years, measures for more promotional avenues for Short Service Commission Officers in their cadre, reservation and lateral transfer to PSU, CPMF, Railways etc. and Prorata pension to officers.	83	The tenure of Short Service Commissioned Officers in the Army has been increased to 14 years from 10 years with effect from 31st March, 2004. A Committee set up by the Government has also recommended specific measures for SSC Officers like concessions in the Civil Service Exams, lateral induction into Central Para Military Forces, Public/ Private Sectors etc., which are under examination.
11.	Specialized training should be imparted to NCC cadets so that they can face SSB more confidently. Provide necessary support for introduction of modern teaching methodologies and better infrastructure. Promote studies of language of the region, Hindi and English in addition to introduction of uniform curriculum.	84	Sanction of the Government has been conveyed for commencement of SSB Training Course at NCC Officers Training Academy (OTA), Kamptee and NCC OTA, Gwalior. It is mandatory for every student to join the NCC while joining Sainik Schools, Apart from Hindi and English, regional language is also being taught in Sainik Schools.
12.	Implementation of 'One Rank One Pension'	88	The Government have constituted a Group of Ministers to go into various aspects of the issue relating to 'One Rank One Pension'.
13.	Information Directorate should be a tri-service body while coordinating closely with the Ministry of Home Affairs and intelligence agencies.	92	A Directorate of Information Warfare & Information Technology has been formed in the HQ IDS to take up the issues of Information Warfare (IW) at tri-service level.

1	2	3	4
14.	Acquisition and deployment of Electronic Warfare and Electronic Counter-Counter Measures be given high priority and steps taken for their indigenous development.	94	High priority has been accorded for acquisition of Electronic Warfare (EW) and Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM).
15.	Our soldiers must be provided the best available equipments in the world	101	The Committee's recommendations are endorsed for implementation in future plans.
16.	Old and defective stock of mines fuses be replaced with modern, state-of-the-art mines and excavation equipments for demining for use in future operations	103	Old stock mines upto 1975 vintage have been sentenced as 'unserviceable' and are being disposed off, while proof testing of mines of vintage 1976-1989 is under progress by the Directorate General of Quality Assurance (DGQA). For future operations, AHQ is considering the procurement of a new family of state-of-the-art mines and demining equipment.
17.	Formulate a long-term plan to ensure that Bharat Dynamics Ltd. (BDL) get regular orders and the expertise developed and the state-of-the-art facilities in these centers of excellence are gainfully utilized.	109	Early finalization of the Armed Forces' Perspective Plan will enable BDL to plan its production schedule and ensure better utilization of installed capacity. The Company is also exploring the possibilities of exporting its products to other countries.
18.	Time bound modernization programme of Ordnance Factories should be vigorously pursued and adequate financial allocation earmarked to make them competitive and at par with the international standards.	115 & 123	The observations have been noted for compliance. An estimated amount of Rs.1804 Crs has been projected during 10th Plan period under New Capital (NC) and Renewal and Replacement (RR), which is under consideration of the Government.
19.	(a) Ordnance Factory Board should chalk out a comprehensive plan to increase its market share in the domestic market by introduction of new products through the Transfer of Technology route. (b) Ordnance Factory Board should also formulate a strategy to increase their exports further. Ordnance Factory Board needs to be restructured by the induction of experts as to make it a truly professional body.	116	The observations made by the Committee have been noted for compliance. The recommendations of the Committee for restructuring of the Board would be considered for implementation keeping in view the recommendations of the various expert groups in this regard. However, OFB already has representatives of users, designing and inspection agencies and producers, who are experts in their own areas.
20.	Ordnance Factories should be more careful in manufacturing and storage of ammunitions so that ammunition of critical importance do not go waste.	123	The observations made by the Committee have been noted for compliance.

1	2	2	3
21.	Allocation of funds for implementation of the Navy's 15 year shipbuilding plan.	134	All efforts will be made by Government to ensure that adequate funds are provided to the Navy to maintain its force level.
22.	Adequate budgetary support should be provided to Coast Guard to fully equip it with the latest state-of-the-art equipments and systems.	142	The Coast Guard has been equipped from time to time with new kind of vessels/aircrafts to meet the specific functional requirement. Modernization of vessels/aircrafts of CG and suitable additions thereon are undertaken on a continuing basis.
23.	To ensure that the induction plan of LCA is not delayed any further and to secure licenced production of Mirage-2000.	153	Efforts are being made for the induction of the first production version of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) with Initial Operation Clearance (IOC) in March, 2007 and Final Operation Clearance (FOC) in March, 2009, the induction of the first squadron in the Air Force is expected by 2010-11.
24.	The Public Relations Division of the Ministry should be adequately strengthened and sensitized to be more proactive for presentation of factual position in the correct perspective.	154	A series of steps are being taken to strengthen and modernize the media activities of the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR).
125.	The development of Aerospace Command must be examined expeditiously by the Air Headquarters and concrete steps be taken to set up the Command earliest.	158	The Government is in the process of examining all aspects related to an Aerospace Command.
26.	Install adequate number of sensors/radars all along the international borders of the country Equip the Defence forces with military satellites with high resolution camera to keep watch on the activities in the border regions.	161 & 162	Adequate medium level coverage along the Western and Northern borders already exists. Airspace coverage in Central and Peninsular India is yet to be adequately catered for. Satellite Based Surveillance (SBS) Programme has also been launched to augment surveillance over the Indian airspace.
27.	Develop the Advanced Avionics Systems indigenously	170	A number of measures have been taken by the Government for the HAL to acquire expertise for the indigenous development and manufacture of hardware & software required for Advanced Avionics Systems.
28.	Development of BrahMos and NAG should be expedited.	175	The Indo-Russian Joint Venture (JV) has completed the development of anti-ship version of the BrahMos missile. The land to land version is in the development phase. For air launched missile with Sukhoi aircraft (Su-30 Mk-I), design effort has started. Nag missile fitted in Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) for Army aviation is being developed and project will be accelerated. ALH-NAG carriage trials are planned in the 2nd quarter of 2005.

12.04 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Re: Situation arising out of recent decision of All India Radio to discontinue services from Delhi in five Regional Languages and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto*

[English]

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL (Dibrugarh): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The situation arising out of recent decision of the All India Radio to discontinue services from Delhi in five regional languages and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): Sir, Prasar Bharati has informed that it has been decided to shift some of the regional language news units along with the staff from Delhi to concerned regional stations of All India Radio. ...(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: What is happening in this House? How can everybody speak at the same time?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: AIR broadcasts two types of news bulletins in the regional languages. These bulletins are compiled and edited in New Delhi by the General News Room. They are heard by the listeners mainly in the State where their regional language is mainly spoken. These bulletins convey the national news and some amount of international and business news. There are 17 such languages.

Now, I come to the State level regional language bulletins. These are compiled by the Regional News Unit of All India Radio situated in State Capital, but in a few larger States, there is more than one such RNU. These bulletins focus on State level development news and other major national and international events.

Both bulletins are to cater to those speaking in the regional languages of various States. There is no difference in the broadcast coverage of these two types of bulletins. However, Sindhi is a regional language, which

is not the official language of any State. Only national language bulletins are being broadcast in this language.

At present, 17 national level regional language bulletins are being prepared, edited, translated and read out from Delhi. Various problems have arisen, such as:

- (i) Lack of sufficient regional language news editors, for supervision of translation, having appropriate knowledge and regional language skills. This affects the quality of news presentation adversely.
- (ii) Large portion of work of translation is being done by the casual workers due to shortage of permanent employees, which has caused problems of diction, accent, etc.

It was felt that shifting of the Regional language News Units dealing with national level bulletins to the State Capitals will overcome these operational difficulties. In each of the State Capitals, Regional News Unit has trained News Editors, who are also fluent in the regional language, unlike Delhi. In addition, the News Readers/News Readers-cum-Translators available in the State Capitals are also universally admitted to be of higher standard both in voice quality, language knowledge and diction than those in Delhi.

National level bulletins will continue to be based on the approved Master script prepared by the General News Room at New Delhi and the listeners will also receive the same mix of national and international news as before, but the accent and quality of translation will be better. Exactly the same number of regional stations of All India Radio will broadcast the news bulletins. There will be no impact on listeners in the National Capital because of the change.

Three units have been shifted as follows:

- (i) Telugu to Hyderabad w.e.f. 1.4.2005
- (ii) Kannada to Bangalore/Dharwad w.e.f. 27.4.2005
- (iii) Sindhi to Ahmedabad w.e.f. 27.4.2005

This issue was also discussed, Sir, in the meeting of the Members of Parliament of the Consultative Committee to this Ministry and followed up by a meeting of all the MPs concerned, with me being in the Chair. It is not that any decision was taken there. We only discussed it, because concerns were voiced by Members of the Consultative Committee as well.

This decision to shift the bulletins will not go against the role of All India Radio to integrate the whole nation. With this decision, the editorial guidelines for retention of

* Also placed in Library, See No. L.T. 2075/05

[Shri S. Jaipal Reddy]

national character of the language bulletins can be provided from Delhi by using on-line communication.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL: Whatever the hon. Minister has spoken, I think it is totally against the interest of the country. It is because All-India Radio has played a very significant role in the country, specially, in integrating the whole nation. Through its fast and varied network, it has brought together people in different areas speaking different languages. It has a unifying and binding role in the country.

This is not a step in the right direction and would immensely go against national integration. This would also hurt the sentiments of the large number people in respective States, particularly, Assam and North-East. We are far from the National Capital. If we are attached to the National Capital it is through language. Language is a very very sensitive issue. Now, they want to de-link Assamese language from National Capital. It will go against the interest of the national integration process. So, we cannot support this stand. It is because at the time of taking this stand particularly, the hon. Minister would have thought, for the cause of the country, the ethos of the freedom struggle. We want to stay together. India must stay together. National Capital must create room for everybody's accommodation. The sense of accommodation must be made strong. Hon. Minister in the House is saying 'lack of sufficient regional language news editors'. What do you mean by this 'sufficient'? You have no intention to recruit resourceful person to fill up the gap. You are saying 'this affects the quality of news presentation adversely'. It is because if you do not have the resourceful persons, of course, it will affect. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Come to the question, please. He has mentioned only three units.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL: Sir, I am coming to it. The news broadcast from All-India Radio, Delhi is different in content and depth from the news broadcast by the regional centre. It is because it covers the national and international issues. As you have been saying that the news matter can be faxed from the Delhi regional centres, I would like to refer a matter related to Hyderabad and how it is affecting the entire procedure. After shifting Telugu unit to the Hyderabad, it is learnt that the contents and news are being faxed from Delhi to Hyderabad. Here casuals are being employed in addition to the already available regular staff to translate and broadcast the news. This has complicated the existing well-settled procedure that was followed prior to shifting. Neither this resulted in improving the quality, nor in any administrative convenience as

claimed by the administration. Now, I do not want to prolong my debate. I want to simply ask my question. As you know, Assam and North-East are going through a very troubled time. We do not want to alienate that part of the country from the National Capital.

MR. SPEAKER: What is your question?

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL: I would like to request the hon. Minister that after considering all these developments, would the hon. Minister re-examine the whole thing and continue the language news bulletin from New Delhi? That I want to know from him.

MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, Mr. Minister. Although there are no other notices given in time, I will call some of the hon. Members.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Okay, Sir. I have no objection.

MR. SPEAKER: Even if you had, I would have overruled it. It is difficult to overrule you! I have a long list and I cannot call all. Let me start with Shri Mohan Singh.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN SINGH (Deoria): MR. Speaker, Sir, Delhi is the capital of India and we believe that Delhi bears cosmopolitan character in which languages and culture of all states is reflected. I think that it does not behave such an able and erudite Minister to make such lame excuse that bulletins in regional languages are not broadcast from the capital because their quality and the pronunciation of the announcers and their understanding of those languages is not flawless.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we believe Delhi to be the true face of India and people from all the states in the country come to and live in Delhi due to its being the capital of the country. When these people do not get to listen the news in the in the capital in their regional language or in their state languages, while staying in the Capital of their country Delhi, a feeling of discontentment grips them and they tend to think in parochial terms and they feel that they belong not to India but to a limited state or region in they speak in they belong not to India but to a limited state or region in. Therefore, I believe that keeping in view the large size of India, unity and integrity of the country, broadcast in all the regional languages should be made from India's capital and its center. I want to know the action being taken by the hon. Minister in this regard?

[English]

SHRI KIRIP CHALIHA (Guwahati): Mr. Speaker, Sir,

this is a very sensitive matter. So, I would definitely urge upon the Minister not to be guided by inexplicable reasons and considerations that are extraneous. More importantly I would like to urge upon the Minister not to be misled by the officers of Prasar Bharati who are trying to sacrifice the broader concept and the need of national unity. They are sacrificing national unity due to financial and technical considerations.

Sir, I thank all the hon. Members who have raised this matter. I think their sentiments have to be understood that the Delhi Station of All India Radio has been an institution and it has become almost a centre for national heritage. Under no circumstance we should allow the segregation to take place and give an impression that India has now become decentralised centres and there is no need for these institutions like All India Radio which represents the nation as a whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Babu Rao Mediyam.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (Uluberia): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also want to ask a question on this.

MR. SPEAKER: Telugu language is affected. Telugu language news bulletin has been shifted. That is why I have called him.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH: Sir, I have been the architect for this issue to be raised.

DR. BABU RAO MEDIYAM (Bhadrachalam): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to raise two questions.

Telugu, Kannada and Singhli language news bulletin units have been shifted to their respective State capitals. I feel Telugu is the third largest spoken language in India. Both for me and the Minister it is our Mother tongue. Moreover, Telugu is known as 'Italian of the East'. As the Minister said, I feel there is a dilution in the spirit of national integration because in the process of translating, compiling and gathering news, the original words and the regional spirit of that language will be diluted.

MR. SPEAKER: What is your question?

DR. BABU RAO MEDIYAM: My question is, this whole issue is erupting from the lack of manpower in the Delhi Radio Station because for so many years there is a ban on recruitment of News Readers. So, due to less number of News Readers in Delhi, the persons who know more languages other than their own Mother tongue are overburdened with work relating to other languages which they know. As a result, the persons working in various language news units are being reduced day-by-day.

Therefore, I would like to know whether the Minister will consider to lift the ban on recruitment and recruit more number of people into these regional language news units of Delhi Radio Station so that we can prolong this process of broadcasting regional language news bulletins from Delhi.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. You have made your point. Shri Ramdas Athawale.

SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA (Rampur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I want to associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Not now. If I call you, then you can do so.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU (Srikakulam): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also associate myself with the feelings expressed by Dr. Babu Rao Mediyam.

MR. SPEAKER: You can associate, but you cannot make a speech. Nobody bothered to give notice on this matter. Only one hon. Member gave notice and I have given him opportunity. But now I have got a long list of names of hon. Members who want to ask questions. I cannot call all of them.

SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA: Sir, I am also from Andhra Pradesh, but my *karma bhoomi* is Uttar Pradesh.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes; you associate with this both for Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: Sir, I am also associating with this.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, you associate. This is an exception. The language question is a very sensitive issue and that is why I am making some exception.

Shri Ramdas Athawale, if your intervention is relevant, please ask a question.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE (Pandharpur): Yes, Sir, it is relevant. It's been more than 50 years and we have 17 Indian languages. The bulletin in these languages is broadcast from All India Radio, Delhi and Marathi speaking people living in India also listen this news bulletin. ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You only ask the question.

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my

[Shri Ramdas Athawale]

request to the hon. Minister is just to continue the broadcast of bulletin of Indian languages from Delhi. If the Govt. is not able to find persons conversant in these languages then we are ready to provide them. We are ready to provide people required in any language. Therefore, the Govt. should not discontinue this bulletin. What action is proposed to be taken by the Govt. for continuing this bulletin from Delhi?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: As an exception, since he seems to be the Minister's choice, I am calling Shri Hannan Mollah. But this is not to be treated as a precedent in future.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH: Thank you, Sir and it will not be treated as a precedent.

Sir, this is the third attempt to shift the regional language news units. First it was attempted during the tenure of Shrimati Sushma Swaraj. At that time I protested and checked it. For the second time, it was attempted during the tenure of Shri Arun Jaitley. Again I protested and checked it.

MR. SPEAKER: Very good.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH: Now this is the third time when my attention was drawn to this issue. We had a long discussion with the Minister and he is also very sympathetic towards this matter. On this matter, there is correct diagnosis of the illness, but wrong treatment is being given. For typhoid, you cannot give the treatment of diabetes or diarrhoea.

There are two problems. One is, in the regional language news read out from Delhi, sometimes the language is not correct because the News Readers are staying in Delhi for a long time and they forget their own language. That problem is there.

Secondly, there is the problem of editing. To overcome that, the Government has to recruit new people. Instead of that, they are winding the units. So, there is correct diagnosis of the illness, but wrong treatment is being given. I submitted to the Minister that this is a national question, linguistic question, national integration is related to that and so bureaucratic understanding will not help.

The point is, 61 employees are working here. They are old. I would like to know whether their service will be in trouble or new recruitment will be done. I would like to know from the Leader of the House whether the Central Government will relax the ban at least in the case of All India Radio in the interest of national integration.

MR. SPEAKER: We have got a most sensitive Minister. I am sure he will look into it.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH: I hope this will be taken care of.

[Translation]

SHRI SHAILENDRA KUMAR (Chall): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have also given a notice for speaking on this issue. ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Everyone has given notice.

... (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: About 15 hon. Members have given notice.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Shailendra Kumar, I am sorry. I am very accommodative to you. Nothing will go on record now.

(Interruptions)*...

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, please do not answer him.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No, I will not allow indiscipline in the House.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, first of all, as the hon. Members have rightly observed, All India Radio has historically played a highly integrative role and I would like to state here, with all the emphasis at my command, that All India Radio would continue to play that integrative role.

Secondly, I appreciate the need to see that the position of various languages in India is not only preserved but also promoted. Ours is a country which is not only known for religious diversity but also for linguistic diversity.

Therefore, I am alive to the language sensitivity. The concerns expressed by the hon. Members are well taken, I am afraid, they are not well placed.

What used to happen in the days before the current

* Not recorded.

satellite technology came into play was that these news broadcasts used to read from Delhi. But they were being heard only in those respective States. Because the broadcasts were being translated, read from Delhi, it does not mean that they were being heard all over the country. With this change. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not interrupt.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I will listen to them at the end of the day. I am keeping my mind open. But I want them to note the facts.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: Let them continue. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: No interruptions please.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I yield my palm to none including Shri Yerrannaidu and Shrimati Jayaprada, who is an MP from Uttar Pradesh in my love for Telugu language. But having said that, please remember whether on account of reading, either from Delhi or from the concerned State capital, the coverage of broadcast will not be altered even by .001 per cent.

The problem is, the master copy is prepared in Delhi, either in English or in Hindi. It is translated and read from Delhi. There is no editorial staff to check the quality of translation, to check the quality of pronunciation, to check the quality of diction and to check the quality of delivery. These are practical problems. We have been receiving complaints from people, who are listeners about the quality.

What is happening is that the master copy, which is prepared in Delhi, will get passed on to the State capitals for instant translation and reading from there, though it is read from there. It is not said that it is read from Hyderabad. It is a national broadcast. It contains national contents. It contains international news. It contains business news. Therefore, I do not see that the quality is affected. I have not yet taken a final view because I am still engaged in the process of consultations with the Members of the Consultative Committee. We have had extensive meetings. At the end of the day, I will go by your view. But I do not want to you to fall a prey to this canard that somehow the place of language is being denigrated. It is not true and nobody will be retrenched.

The only people who are affected by this are the people who, as casual news readers, are employed time and again from New Delhi. The people who translate the master copy into Telugu and read that are not as good as their counter-parts in Hyderabad. When the coverage of broadcast is not affected, why should we all be so disturbed over the place from where this reading is done?

Therefore, my appeal to all the hon. Members is that they should not get disturbed. There is no need to get disturbed. However, our mind is open. The Prasar Bharati, in its Board meeting in 2000, took this decision. All the steps are since followed. But I would like to assure everybody that this is not going to affect our national integration at all. I must tell you that the bonds of our national integration are much too strong for such mines.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Now, we come to matter of urgent public importance:

Shri Ramji Lal Suman.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, thousands of labourers working in unorganized sector have assembled at Jantar-Mantar today and most probably they will be meeting him as well to express their woes and sufferings. There are about 92 percent labourer engaged in unorganized sector in the country and they have uncertain future ahead of them. They do not get regular work in any field whether it agriculture, handloom, retail trade, domestic work or construction. Their services are not regularized in any of these sectors. Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee the Prime Minister in the previous NDA Government, had announced from the ramparts of Red Fort in 1998 that his Government would provide employment to one crore people. Subsequently, Montek Singh Ahluwalia Committee, S.P. Gupta Committee, Second Labour Commission etc. were set up and many more things were done in this direction but all failed in providing job to the unemployed of the country. Certain initiatives regarding social security were taken but they petered out with the ouster of that government.

The present UPA Government in its Common Minimum Programme had expressed its commitment towards providing employment for the unemployed rural population and had talked about giving employment guarantee. This Government had presented the Rural Employment Guarantee Bill in the Parliament wherein it had promised to provide employment to each and every unemployed person in the country. However, what actually happened was that its commitment of providing employment for 365 days of the year was brought down to a mere 100 days. Out of 593 districts in the country only 150 districts were brought under the purview of this programme. Instead of provision of employment to every unemployed person it has been decided to ensure employment for one person from each family living below

the poverty line in the rural areas of the country. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a very serious problem before the country. It is my firm belief that the main reason for the tension prevailing in our country is unemployment. These very people have come to express their anguish today. It is my accusation that this Government is not as much serious about the issue of providing employment to the labourers as was the previous government. I cannot advocate violence in the country which had leaders like Gandhi, Lohia and Jai Prakash but I definitely wish to stress that the tensions prevailing in various regions of the country, which we term Naxalism, has unemployment as its root cause. Today, I urge this Government to give attention to the problems of the people who have come from all over the country to express their anguish and anger.
...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Ramji Lal Suman, I have allowed you to raise it. It is enough.

...(Interruptions)

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: You cannot associate like this.

...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Would you sit down or not?

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I have got before me notices from four other hon. Members on this question. I am going to read out their names. Their names will be recorded as having associated with this matter. They are:

1. Shri Hannan Mollah,
2. Shri Mohan Singh,
3. Shri Vijoy Krishna, and
4. Shri Ramdas Athawale.

Other hon. Members were not even bothered to give notices. Rising now does not help. It is a very important matter. I am not minimising its importance. I have allowed it to be the first matter to be raised. I am directing that the names of these four hon. Members will be noted as having associated.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the leader of the House is present here. ...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: You have made it. I have said it.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ramji Lal Suman, you are a senior and responsible Member. Mr. Mohan Singh, the Speaker cannot compel any hon. Minister to reply immediately. Or, I cannot compel him at all. But here the Minister is sitting. He has heard you. It is entirely for him to respond or not to respond.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: It is an important matter. So I have allowed it to be raised.

Now, Shrimati Jayaprada.

SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA (Rampur): Sir, I thank you for giving the opportunity.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I wish to attract the attention of the House towards the problem of safety of women. It is written in books and we also hear from venerable elders that:

"Karyashudasi, karneshu mantri
Rupeshu Rambha Grihnesu lakshmi."

Respect for women is merely confined to scriptures. Today, in this House I want to talk about the safety of women, which is a matter of serious concern. After so many years of independence it is really sad that women are not safe even in a metropolitan like Delhi. People talk about security of women and make laws in this regard. Women are said to have been given equal status to men but still their condition is pathetic. Law has to play an important role in this regard. The first priority of any Government that comes to power should be providing security to women.

I also want to remind you that there is a constitutional provision. The constitutional pledge says that every human being should be granted equality, justice and opportunity. Consider the condition of women. We talk about giving them employment, providing them education but no action is being taken to ensure their security, not only in Delhi but in other states as well. Consider the incident that took place

in Mainpuri. The Retd. Judge Upendra has criticised the paramilitary forces in his report. I had discussed this report in the House. The available data shows that maximum police force is engaged in Government security and there are hardly any provision for ensuring safety of women. The records show that 561 incidents of rapes took place in Delhi out of which only 80 people were convicted. During 2002, 422 incidents of rapes took place in Delhi, 150 in Mumbai, 70 in Kolkata and 40 in Chennai. Such figures are a matter of serious concern.

Recently a girl working as a nurse in Shanti Mukund Hospital was raped. When she tried to resist, she was attacked and her eye was damaged. The rapist dragged her to the bathroom and raped her. When he was about to be punished, he agreed to marry her. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: He has been punished.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA: It is right that he has been punished, but these kind of incidents are taking place for the last so many years and if more stringent measures are taken by the govt. and the administration, then no one will dare commit crimes against women. I want to say that Delhi is the capital of India. We try our best to run this country properly.

In one of the caption of the 'Hindustan Times', mentions Delhi 'the capital of rapists'. The Chief Minister of Delhi is a woman. Being a woman, she very well understands the sufferings of women. Apart from it, the chairperson of the UPA Government is also a woman. When their condition is so much serious in a state governed by women, then where will they go? I want to request the government and the honourable Minister to give an assurance after considering over the security of women. Women should be provided security by bringing judicial reforms. In addition to this, administrative reforms are also necessary.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you for raising this issue. I compliment you.

Shrimati Praneet Kaur.

SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR (Patiala): Sir, while the Finance Bill, 2005 has, made a very laudable effort towards rationalisation of taxes and duties for which the Finance Minister deserves fulsome applause, an aspect of some change in the excise duty structure on drugs, and the

adverse impact of this on Small-scale Industry (SSI) drug units, especially those located in Punjab and Haryana appears to have escaped his notice.

Prior to 2005, excise duty on drugs was levied on the first billing price. However, through a notification of 7/1/2005, Excise Duty is being charged on the Maximum Retail Price (MRP). This substantially increases the tax burden on SSI units, and creates an acute disparity between units located in tax exempt States like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttaranchal, and units located elsewhere in the country. This disparity is further accentuated as units in these excise exempted States are exempt from Income Tax as well. The tax burden on the SSI units located in Punjab and Haryana has increased by over 30 per cent, making them completely uncompetitive, and forcing them to either close down or relocate in the tax exempt States. This results in the consequential loss of jobs, and loss of revenue to the non-tax exempt States has occasioned grave concern in Punjab, especially in the Patiala Parliamentary constituency which I represent. There are a total of about 20 units located here in one Assembly constituency, and about 300 in the whole of Punjab. A large-scale migration of these SSI units from Punjab to Himachal Pradesh is on, which this change in duty structure is forcing, and it will lead to a severe disaffection within Punjab. Already there are many reports in the Press which could burgeon into a political controversy.

I would, therefore, like to draw the attention of the Finance Minister to this disparity, and request him through you, and the forum of this House to review the duty structure, and to create a more level playing field.

SHRIMATI C. S. SUJATHA (Mavelikara): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to invite the attention of the House. The migration of labour force is a result of the uneven development of our economy. Our development pattern gives importance to certain areas while many areas remain neglected or not being given adequate preference. The result is that the labour force from the under-developed areas is forced to move to the developed areas to seek employment for their sustenance. People from rural areas migrate to the industrially developed cities. This has been happening for many decades.

The post-reforms period has seen an unprecedented increase in the migration of rural labour force both within the States and inter-States. This was basically due to the crisis in the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector kept starving for public investment. This period has seen the lowest rate of investment in agriculture, in rural infrastructure development, and in allied areas by the

Government. Coupled with this, the policy of the Government to lift the restrictions on import of agricultural produces opened up the floodgates of imports causing sharp fall in the indigenous produces. The withdrawal of subsidies on fertilisers, and other components increased the overall expenditure on agriculture.

Put together, all these factors made agriculture unaffordable for large number of small and medium size farmers in the country. Besides, the drought situation experienced in consecutive years played havoc with this sector. The situation pushed many of the medium and small size farmers to the level of agricultural labourers as they do not have any other skills. This means, the number of labour increased tremendously while the opportunities actually shrunk further. The existing agricultural infrastructure was unable to absorb the increased numbers which forced the labour force to migrate to other areas to locate work.

The condition of the migrant labour is pathetic. They are subjected to cruel exploitation. They are forced to work longer hour with wages lower than normal. They enjoy no security, no benefits. They suffer silently the brutal oppression. The conditions of the women migrant workers are the worst. The migrants working in the most hazardous areas like brick kilns and quarries work for just Rs. 20 to 30 a day. The brick kilns in Andhra Pradesh are mostly run by migrant workers from Orissa. In the agricultural sector too, a number of women workers are working for a pittance. They have no ration cards. They cannot even exercise their democratic right of voting; for, most of them are not included in the voters' list. The irony is that even the Government has no data on the volume of migrant workers in the country, leave alone formulating schemes for their welfare. Therefore, it is most important to undertake a survey to ascertain the magnitude of this problem. The Government should evolve adequate steps to improve the situation, ensure that at least they are given proper wages, and end the brutal oppression they are subjected to.

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Shandil, your matter has been dealt with already and an answer has been given on VAT on CSD canteen purchases. You know that. So, let it not be raised again. I am sure, being a very attentive Member, you have got the answer already.

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA (Jalandhar): Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you very much for giving me a chance to speak on the need of the hour for the farming community. It is rightly said that most of the Indians live in villages. India's economy depends on agriculture. Out of a hundred crore of population in India, there are 12 crore farmers.

They produce different kinds of commodities. The whole nation depends upon them for food. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Singh, all these issues have been dealt with. You want to make a general reference to farmers' conditions but there was a full debate on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Agriculture. Anyway, just point out the main issues instead of going through the entire thing.

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA: Our late brave Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastriji gave the slogan, 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'. If the farmer is happy, the whole nation is happy.

MR. SPEAKER: This has already been discussed. Just briefly mention the main issues. There has been a full discussion on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Agriculture the other day.

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA: I would just take two minutes.

MR. SPEAKER: You are making a long statement.

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA: The cost of agricultural inputs has increased many times. Our farmers need support from the Government for getting new and good quality seeds. Our agricultural universities should develop seeds which are high yielding. If the farmers get more yield and good quality produce, they can compete with the farmers of the rest of the world. More grants should be given to agricultural universities and research centres so that new seed varieties and new agricultural practices could be developed.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, please conclude now.

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA: There is also a need to look after the general conditions of the farmers. Many farmers of different parts of the country are committing suicides.

MR. SPEAKER: All these issues have been discussed.

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA: A farmer of the country on whom the economy of the nation depends commits suicide. We should take a serious note of it. The Government should come forward to help the farmers. It should include seeds at subsidised rates, crop insurance, concessions in electricity bills, speedy purchase of agricultural produce and timely payment to farmers. They should also be given loans at cheaper rates of interest for purchase of tractors, implements and agricultural inputs.

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry, you will have to conclude.

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA: I have a very valid suggestion to make. Minimum Support Price (MSP) may be extended to the crops being taken up under diversification programme. I think, Punjab is already doing a lot of works in diversification. So, MSP should be given. Increased price for products and adequate funds may be provided to the agricultural universities for research and development. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry. I have already allowed this matter.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURJEET SINGH RANA: This has not been addressed by our Government. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: This matter has been fully discussed on the floor of the House. Demands for Grants relating to the Ministry of Agriculture had been debated. The hon. Minister had given more than a comprehensive answer. Now, again repeating the same thing does not help. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Kunwar Manvendra Singh, you are not helping me.

...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI RAMSEVAK SINGH (Gwalior): Sir, I would like to make submission about the farmers growing B.T. Cotton in Madhya Pradesh. The State Government provides seeds and pesticides to the farmers growing B.T. Cotton. But, this time, they have not been provided these materials whereas the sowing period of B.T. Cotton was till April. Because of this, the farmers of the State are so worried. I request the Union Government to ask the State Government to immediately provide the seeds and pesticides to the farmers growing B.T. Cotton in Madhya Pradesh.

[English]

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA (Panskura): Sir, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

I know that I am raising a matter of sensitivity, but I am not raising it as a complaint. Please do not take it that I am raising it as a complaint. It is only out of anguish. Maybe my anguish will be shared by many or all in this House. My anguish is this and that is why I am raising the matter. I wish that parliamentary proceedings might be adequately covered in the media than they are being done now.

In a democracy, media is a powerful organ of the State, not only of the State but also of the society. Executive, Judiciary and Parliament - all these three important components are there to make democracy more fruitful. But, at the same time, it is true that media plays a powerful role. People of the country have a right to have an access to information as to what the parliamentarians are doing, what is being discussed, what is the policy of the Government, what is the impact of that policy on the life of the people or economy of the country. It is a matter of national importance. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Now, you are being seen and heard throughout the country.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: The credit goes to you for that. ...*(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): The credit goes to the hon. Speaker ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: But it has a very limited coverage. In a country of 110 million, I do not know if everybody can cover, but print media and electronic media collectively can cover a substantial part. My anguish arises because there is not adequate reflection of what is happening in the House. If something unusual happens in the House, if there is a boycott, and if there is a hold up, it is widely reported. ...*(Interruptions)* Media has a right to report according to its choice. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: They have the freedom.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: I also believe firmly in the freedom of the Press. In an open society, freedom of the Press is a valuable weapon to protect not only the openness but also to protect the society as a whole. While saying so, Press also has its responsibility. My anguish is because there is always a tendency to sensitize the news. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Gurudas Dasgupta, we should not advise them. It is for them to decide.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: I am not here to advise

anybody. I am free to express my anguish. ...*(Interruptions)*
My anguish is sensitisation is choice of anybody who does it. But my point is that important debates take place, important statements are made, and important deliberations take place. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I am sure they will consider.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: I hardly find a place in the media, particularly in the print media.

Sir, you kindly permit me to give an example. I am not naming the Press. I should not. I will just give one example.

MR. SPEAKER: As we have our rights, the Press has their rights.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: Sir, I know.

MR. SPEAKER: Therefore, they will exercise judgements in their own wisdom.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: Sir, I am a firm believer in the freedom of the Press. ...*(Interruptions)* But Sir, it is also true that there is a word 'social accountability'. We are accountable to the people. You are accountable to the people and also, the people have the right to know what is being done here.

MR. SPEAKER: I hope, all of us remember that.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: That can only be done if there is a fruitful media. Sir, I give you an example. Day before yesterday, with your kind permission, we discussed a human issue 'the problem of pre-natal determination of sex and no penal action being taken and the status of women'. It was an extremely sensitive issue. I found in a particular Press, a particular paper, that the news of a rape was placed in the first page saying the victim or a rape is being requested to marry the person who has done it. It is in the first page but the status of women in the country that the Parliament deliberated upon, with your kind permission, was completely left out. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I think, the Press has also played a glorious role in our history.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: Sir, we are not condemning it. It is a question of appeal to the conscience. I can appeal to the conscience of the media, I can appeal to the conscience of the people, and I can appeal to the

conscience of the industry. I believe that faithful selection is their choice.

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: They have the right to select. Selection is their choice. Freedom is their choice. Let Parliament be not ignored. We want Parliament to be reflected in the media so that people can have access to information. Sir, it is not happening. I appeal to the Press, through you, of the whole country like this. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR (Barrackpore): Sir, I would like to associate with Shri Dasgupta by saying that the Press has the right to criticize Parliament and Parliament also has every right to express. ...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

KUNWAR MANVENDRA SINGH (Mathura): When media people read out news on T.V., they say Sonia, Atal, Manmohan. They do not suffix 'ji' with these names. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I do not understand what you are doing.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing will be recorded.

(Interruptions) ...*

MR. SPEAKER: Kunwar Manvendra Singh, I am requesting you - I have requested you many times - to please give up this habit.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I wish to make a comment. Parliament represents the people. Obviously, important issues are discussed here.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: You are interrupting me. That is a gross violation of the rules.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV (Jhunjharpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by honourable Dasgupta ji.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, you are associating. Please sit down. This is a very sensitive matter.

...(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are staunch supporters of freedom of press. Yesterday, there was a debate on election reforms in the Parliament. Only Indian Express has published this news, and other news papers have completely ignored this news. When black bill was brought in Bihar in the year 1988 then 36 organisations had suffered the blows of lathi-charge for the sake of freedom of press. Press is the fourth estate of democracy. ...(Interruptions) But, parliamentary proceedings should be given due coverage by the press. It is our only request to the press.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I will not allow anybody else.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record.

(Interruptions)* ...

MR. SPEAKER: Do not record anything. I will not allow anything to go on record.

(Interruptions)* ...

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)* ...

MR. SPEAKER: We have all to introspect. Please sit down. Shri Rao, nothing is being recorded.

(Interruptions)* ...

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dikshit, this is not the way to raise an issue. There are methods of raising it.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI SANDEEP DIKSHIT (East Delhi): I also wish to associate and say that the cable operators are not giving live telecast of parliamentary proceedings I, though in a lot of areas, people are applying to their cable operators to provide it.

* Not recorded.

13.00 hrs.

MR. SPEAKER: I am requesting all the hon. Members that this is not the way to do it. You say that it is violation of law, but it is a basic need for some.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You are a very articulate Member.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Rao, you are crossing the limit

...(Interruptions)

SHRI K. S. RAO (Eluru): No, Sir. I am not crossing the limit. I am only requesting you to allow me to speak for a minute on this very sensitive issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Rao, you are not sitting down. I am requesting you to sit down.

SHRI K. S. RAO: Sir, we are not opposing what you say, but a different picture is going through the media about the Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, you go on. This is why it is not being reported in the media.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: This will not be recorded at all.

(Interruptions)* ...

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. I have not allowed you to speak.

This is a very sensitive matter. The Parliament is an important institution. There is no doubt that hon. members of the media are fully aware of the importance of the Parliament, where we are discussing important issues. But freedom of Press in this country is a very treasured freedom, and we have also known of the very glorious role played by the media in this country.

Some sentiments have been expressed by the hon. Members, and I have allowed them to be raised here. But it cannot be a matter of just utilising the floor of the House to criticise each other. Therefore, my request to hon. Members is this. You have made your points on this issue. Now, it is entirely for the free. Press to decide how to conduct itself, which I do not dictate. We can make some

* Not recorded.

suggestions. I treat the points raised by the hon. Members as suggestions that have come. No criticism, as such, is being permitted here. I do not treat it as a criticism.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: Sir, I have never said that I am criticising the Press.

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR: Sir, it is not a criticism.

MR. SPEAKER: Therefore, it is entirely for them to decide. They are as much a relevant part of the democratic system as the elected representatives of the people.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet again at 2 p.m.

13.01 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till
Fourteen of the Clock.*

14.06 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Six
minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.*

(SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL in the Chair)

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House shall now take up Matters under Rule 377.

- (i) **Need to take suitable steps to check pollution of River Ganga caused by Simbawali Sugar Mill in Hapur Parliamentary Constituency, Uttar Pradesh**

[Translation]

SHRI SURENDRA PRAKASH GOYAL (Hapur): Sir, the contaminated water of Simbawali Sugar Mill, located in my parliamentary constituency Hapur, U.P., is being released into the historical river Ganga.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Goyal ji, you are supposed to read the approved text only.

SHRI SURENDRA PRAKASH GOYAL: On the one hand, the Government of India are spending hundreds of crore of rupees under the Ganga Action Plan to check pollution and on the other hand, the above sugar mill is releasing a large quantity of untreated water and effluents

of the factory into the river Ganga which is causing environmental pollution in the adjoining areas of Simbawali and also causing financial loss to the farmers.

Therefore, I request the Union Govt. to take immediate action to check the pollution being caused by the above sugar mill.

- (ii) **Need to connect Amreli Parliamentary Constituency in Gujarat with a National Highway**

SHRI V. K. THUMMAR (Amreli): Sir, even after lapse of 57 years of independence, my parliamentary constituency Amreli has not yet been connected with any of the National Highways of the country whereas goods worth crores of rupees are transported to the Pipavav port situated in Amreli district. The vehicles carrying goods pass through Amreli but no help is being provided by the state government for the construction of roads there. Due to which industrial development of Amreli has come to a standstill whereas there is an immense possibility of setting up of several food processing industries there. In absence of a National Highway, the vehicles going towards the Pipavav port face a lot of difficulties.

Therefore, through this House, I would request the Union Government that Amreli district in Gujarat should immediately be connected with the National Highways of the country so that the industrial development of Amreli may get a fillip.

- (iii) **Need to take suitable measures to check the menace caused by elephants in Periyakulam Parliamentary Constituency, Tamil Nadu**

[English]

SHRI J. M. AARON RASHID (Periyakulam): Sir, in Cumbum Assembly Constituency, Pudupatti and other adjoining downhill areas, the farmers are living in great unbearable loss due to havoc and panic caused by elephants coming from the adjoining forest areas. So far three persons have been trampled to death by the elephants and many others are injured. They have also caused great damage to the sugarcane, maize, paddy and groundnut crops including plantation trees. The centre part of the tender leaves (kuruthu) of coconut saplings with which the trees grow are all damaged and eaten up by the wild elephants. I request the Central Government to give suitable directions to the State Government or the Ministry of Agriculture of Government of India to lay iron fence border on the downhill to protect innocent lives and livelihood of the small farmers. The Government should also give compensation for the loss of lives and property to the people in the Cumbum Assembly Constituency which comes under Periyakulam Parliamentary Constituency.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I pointed out yesterday and today also I may point out that we have to confine ourselves to the text which is approved in the case of Matters under Rule 377. So, please confine to the approved text.

[Translation]

- I would like to remind all the honourable members
- that in case of the matters raised by the members under the rule 377, they should read the approved text only and should not make any changes in it. Honourable members are requested to keep it in their minds.

(iv) Need to open a Kendriya Vidyalaya at Paralakhemundi in Orissa

[English]

- SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR SAHU (Behrampur - Orissa): Sir, there is an urgent need for opening of a Kendriya Vidyalaya at Paralakhemundi, the district headquarter. Paralakhemundi, the headquarter of Gajapati district is having many Central Government offices. Employees who are coming here from other parts of the country face much difficulty for their children's education. The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan has a proposal for opening of a Kendriya Vidyalaya at Paralakhemundi. Accordingly, an expert team has visited Paralakhemundi for survey and to my knowledge has given a favourable
- report for opening of Kendriya Vidyalaya at Paralakhemundi. So, through you, Sir, I draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Human Resource Development to expedite
 - the matter and open the Kendriya Vidyalaya immediately during this session as the district administration has agreed to provide free temporary accommodation to start the school.

(v) Need to enquire into alleged drestation done by Sterlite Industries Limited for setting up of a Captive Power Plant at Korba, Chhattisgarh

[Translation]

- SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUBEY (Dhanbad): Mr.
- Chairman, Sir, causing damage to forest and environment, is considered illegal and punishable offence not only in India but also in other countries of the world.
 - I am making this reference in regard to BALCO whose 51 per cent share and management right is with Sterlite Industries. During construction of a 675 MW captive power plant under its expansion plan, the company felled down thousands of green trees. I would also like to inform this House that there are four thermal power plants in Korba, a small town. Out of those power plants, BALCO owned a 275 MW captive power plant there. After the privatization

of BALCO, modernization of that power plant was to be done to check the misuse of the forest land. Despite, Sterlite Industries was allowed to set up its new power plant. What are the steps being taken by the Union Government to protect the health of Korba residents who are going to become victims of more than 24 thousand Metric Ton Fly ash approximately?

I want to say that the Sterlite Industries has caused damage to forest and environment in setting up of this plant. Apart from strict legal action against the said company, a high level enquiry should be conducted so that the directions issued by honourable Supreme Court in Feb-1997 regarding forest conservation could be strictly adhered to and felling of green trees could be checked.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Dr. Karan Singh Yadav - not present.

Shri Y.G. Mahajan - not present.

Shri Ganesh Singh - not present.

Shri Sukdeo Paswan - not present.

Shri Suresh Chandel - not present.

Shrimati Manorama Madhavraj - not present.

Shri Khagen Das.

(vi) Need to send additional forces to Tripura to check insurgency in the State

[English]

SHRI KHAGEN DAS (Tripura-West): Sir, Tripura has been facing the scourge of terrorism for the last three decades. Being a land-locked hilly State, it has 856 kms. long international border with Bangladesh. The extremely porous border continued with the inhospitable terrain in many parts result in smuggling, borders crimes, infiltration and free movement of terrorists across the border. There are three main terrorist outfits operating in Tripura. They use Bangladesh as a safe sanctuary and have about 50 camps there. The State Government has made all efforts to tackle the situation. I urge the Government of India to meet the following demands immediately for effective tackling of terrorism in the State:

- (1) Two CRPF battalions which were withdrawn from the State be restored at the earliest for effective counter insurgency operations.
- (2) Sanction for raising of three more Indian

Reserve Battalions of Tripura State Rifles be given. The capital cost on construction and company headquarters as also the recurring expenditure for the first five years should be borne by the Government of India.

- (3) 23 Battalions of BSF are needed for guarding Indo-Bangladesh Border along Tripura. At present, 12 battalions of BSF are posted. Adequate number of BSF should be deployed at the earliest for effective manning of border.

- (4) One helicopter be provided exclusively for BSF, in Tripura for maintaining their remote BOPs.

- (vii) Need to provide compensation to the farmers whose crops were affected due to heavy rain in Alapuzha and Pathanamthitta districts in Kerala**

SHRIMATI C. S. SUJATHA (Mavelikara): The farmers of Kuttanad, Upper Kuttanad and Onattukara in Alapuzha District and also Niranam in Pathanamthitta District of Kerala are confronted with.

The paddy cultivators of these areas had to face unforeseen calamity due to heavy rains when the crops were ready for reaping. Crops have been completely devastated in an area of 4000 hectares. The loss calculated is approximately Rs.10 crore. The farmers in these areas depend on loans taken from cooperative banks and other financial institutions for their cultivation activities. The loss of crop rendered these farmers unable even to repay the debts.

In view of the gravity of the situation, I request you to kindly intervene and instruct the authorities concerned to rush relief to the affected farmers in these areas.

- (viii) Need for four laning of road between Delhi and Haridwar with a view to boost tourism**

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA KUMAR (Haridwar): Sir, my constituency, Haridwar, is a famous pilgrimage visited by thousands of pilgrims every day; many of whom then proceed on to tourist spots like Rishikesh, Dehradun etc. from there. Pilgrims as also native/foreign tourists who come to visit Haridwar mostly go there via Delhi. Besides, devotees in large numbers carrying "kanwads" come here from all over the country. Bearing, the above fact in mind, Sir, I wish to bring to his notice the dilapidated state of the main road connecting Delhi and Haridwar which is in a state of extreme negligence at some places. Moreover, it

is a single-lane road. Since there is no divider on this road the vehicles happen to come across head-on making the possibility of accidents a persistent threat.

Hence, I request the Union Government, through you, that in view of the important status of Haridwar and other adjacent tourist places, the single-lane road between Delhi and Haridwar should be converted into a two-lane or a four-lane road.

- (ix) Need to take suitable measures to check increasing level of pollution in rivers in the country**

SHRI REWATI RAMAN SINGH (Allahabad): Cultural tradition of our country is linked with its' rivers. Despite severe pollution we hold the waters of the rivers to be sacred. The drive to clean rivers was started nearly 20 years ago. Despite incurring a lot of expenses over the years we are back to square one.

An estimated Rs. Ten thousand crore was spent under the Ganga Action Plan. Rs. 872 crore was spent under the Yamuna Action Plan. Yet there is no change in level of pollution.

I believe that our plans do have some flaws somewhere. Due to population pressure and changing demographic profile, the shape of cities, house construction activities and consequently, the quantum of polluted water releasing from houses and factories always keep changing. Keeping in view such changes it is imperative that our schemes regarding cleansing of rivers be implemented in a time bound manner so that the schemes may be completed in accordance with the data on the basis of which they were formulated and the schemes may be adapted to the nature of changes taking place as mentioned hereinabove.

Even preventing the release of polluted water from factories and households into the rivers through local efforts will suffice to keep the rivers clean to a large extent. Minister of Environment may please note.

- (x) Need to retain Regional Office of Allahabad Bank at Darbhanga, Bihar**

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV (Jhannjharpur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, in Northern Bihar, Darbhanga is the center for trading and economic and political activities in Mithilanchal. It is also the Divisional Headquarters. The regional branches of Punjab National Bank, Central Bank, Bank of India and Allahabad Bank are functioning there. Approval has been given for opening regional office of

State Bank of India also in this city. However, all of a sudden, Allahabad Bank has decided to close its regional branch in Darbhanga and merge it with the Muzaffarpur regional office that is a great disappointment to the bank's customers. As a result, it will be difficult to take quick action on the complaints and suggestions of the customers living in faraway districts of Eastern Bihar like Kisanjanj and Purnia from Muzaffarpur regional office which is situated at a distance of 750 Km and will lead to inordinate delays.

Therefore, from both geographical and the commercial points of view I would like the Government to urgently take initiatives in public interest to maintain the status-quo in the matter of the location of Allahabad Bank's regional office.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Shri Brajesh Pathak - not present

Shrimati V. Radhika Selvi - not present.

(xi) Need to set up a Department of Agro-Biotechnology in Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra and provide requisite funds for its establishment

[English]

SHRI S. D. MANDLIK (Kolhapur): Sir, I am thankful to you for allowing me to raise a matter under Rule 377.

Sir, the Shivaji University was established in 1962 at Kolhapur. Its jurisdiction covers four districts, viz., Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara and Sholapur. These districts have very large population of agriculturists and they are always in forefront to adopt new agricultural methods.

Even though our country is self-sufficient in food production, it has reached a stage of saturation point in respect of production capacity. In view of this, newer and better methods of food production are a must. Proficiency in DNA technology, along with agro-biotech disease control, and futuristic genetics are a need of the time.

The Shivaji University is located in epicentre of agricultural activities and is best suited for establishment of a national level Research Centre for new agricultural methods. It has sufficient land in possession as also has agriculture college suitably located near the premises of the University. Besides, the University has highly qualified, experienced and persons of high calibre in its faculty of scientists.

Sir, I, therefore, demand through you that a Department of Agro-Biotechnology be established by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development in the Shivaji University and necessary financial assistance be provided for the purpose.

(xii) Need to bring a legislation to regulate functioning of Associated Reproductive Technology (ART) clinics in the country

SHRI M. P. VEERENDRA KUMAR (Calicut): Sir, I wish to bring to the notice of the House an important matter regarding ART clinics.

Sir, associated reproductive technology clinics, in short called as ART Clinics, have perforated all over the country. In the absence of any statutory enactment to regulate their functioning, these clinics are adopting illegal, unethical and callous methods for treating patients by using donor ova/ donor sperm or donor embryo without the consent of the concerned spouse, which infringes the Constitutional rights of the spouse and of the offspring as guaranteed under article 21 of the Constitution. Not only the legal aspect, use of donor ova/ donor sperm affects the social order and moral framework of the society, causes indecisiveness in paternity, confusion in the matter of succession and is harmful to the society at large, infertility clinics should not be allowed to indulge in unethical practices of producing, storage, selling or indiscriminate use of donor ova/ donor sperm or donor embryo.

I, therefore, urge upon the Government to ponder over the issues involved and bring legislation before the House expeditiously.

14.24 hrs.

COASTAL AQUACULTURE AUTHORITY BILL, 2005

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we will take up Item No. 12, Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to move. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN (Firozabad): Mr. Chairman,

[Shri Ramji Lal Suman]

Sir, today morning in the leaders' meeting hon. Speaker had decided that a discussion on the motion on electoral reforms introduced in the House by Shri Devendra Prasad Yadavji which is already under discussion, will be taken up first and the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill, 2005 will be taken up after the discussion is over. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is mandatory to take up, legislative business first immediately after taking up the matters under Rule 377. That subject is also listed. It will be taken up after that. Please, let the motion be moved. Please, take your seat.

SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to move:-

" that the Bill to provide for the establishment of a Coastal Aquaculture Authority for regulating the activities connected with coastal aquaculture in coastal areas and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

Hon. Chairman, Sir, as the hon. Members are aware that pisciculture is such a sector through which adequate development can be undertaken by higher production. This will help us in increasing employment, providing additional income to farmers, improving the nutritional level of people and increasing our exports. For this purpose, a vital sector with huge capacity is the coastal aquaculture which mainly produces prawn. Saline water is considered appropriate for aquaculture. Only about 14% of the land out of the total area of 12 lakh hectares has so far been used for the purpose. Still, the prawns produced in this area contribute to around Rs. 6000 crore in our annual exports. Therefore, if we increase the area of land under coastal aquaculture, then there may be substantial rise in exports and we will be able to get other benefits too. Here, it would be pertinent to note that this land will remain useless if it is not used for aquaculture because this land is not fit for agriculture or for any other economic activity.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, presently we are doing aquaculture on only 14% of land. Our income will rise many times if the area of land under aquaculture is raised to 30 or 40%. But, we will have to see that this does not cause any harm to the environment and people like traditional fishermen, farmers etc. living in coastal areas are not affected adversely. The present Bill is being presented in this very context.

Sir, I would like to briefly explain the background of the need to bring this Bill before the august House. Aquaculture farms were set up in large numbers for

producing prawns in the coastal areas, particularly on the eastern coast. In a writ petition filed in the Supreme Court in 1994, it was urged to impose a ban on these farms as they were causing harm to the environment. The Supreme Court in its judgment given in December, 1996 had directed that since aquaculture is an industry, therefore, the ban applicable on industries under CRZ notification issued in February, 1991 under Environment Protection Act will also be applicable to it. The Supreme Court also directed that an authority should be set up for regulating prawn farms in the coastal areas. The court had directed that the prawn farms existing in the coastal areas at that time should be removed. Although, a stay was granted against removal of the prawn farms on the basis of the review petitions filed by the Agriculture Ministry and others but final decision on review petitions is still awaited. According to the directions of the Supreme Court, an Aquaculture Authority has been set up under a retired judge of High Court with its headquarters in Chennai.

Sir, the Government's view in this matter has been that there is a need to regulate aquaculture in the coastal areas for the protection of the environment. But, this should not be treated as an industry and, therefore, it should not be a prohibited activity under the CRZ notification.

The Government wanted the aquaculture authority to continue to regulate coastal aquaculture. In fact, with this view the Rajya Sabha passed Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1997. But before the dissolution of Lok Sabha, it could not be passed in Lok Sabha. It is important to mention here that a group of 13 parliamentarians representing different political parties visited 8 coastal states in June-July 1997. The group took stock of the ground realities after holding discussions with officers, associations of fishermen and local people. The group was of the view that prawn culture be continued and regulated by law. Accordingly, Aquaculture Authority Bill was again introduced in the Rajya Sabha in 2000. It was referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture so that it could scrutinize it and submit its report. The Standing Committee submitted its report in December 2000 with many important suggestions for amending the Bill. In the meantime representations were received from different Associations of Fishermen and prawn farmers regarding certain provisions of the Bill. The suggestions of Parliamentary Committee and other representations would have necessitated various amendments. So, it was decided to introduce a new Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill. Accordingly Aquaculture Authority Bill 2000 has been withdrawn and a new Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill has been introduced.

The Bill contains the provisions regarding guidelines to be prescribed by the Central Government to ensure that no harm is done to the environment by coastal aquaculture and it is conducted in such a way that the livelihood of people belonging to different classes is secured. Thus we shall ensure that coastal aquaculture does not go against environment as the hon'ble Supreme Court has commented. And we would also like to clarify that aquaculture can not be treated as an industry and that is why it should not be treated as a restricted activity under CRZ notification. So, it has been clarified in the Bill that aquaculture was never a restricted activity under the meaning of CRZ notification. Aquaculture Authority, constituted on the directions of the hon'ble Supreme Court will continue to ensure that aquaculture activities are conducted under the provisions of the Act and the guidelines to be issued under the Act so that it does not cause any harm to the environment. In fact, Aquaculture Authority will get an autonomous base from this law and perform its works more effectively.

In keeping with our desire to ensure the protection of environment coastal aquaculture activities have been banned within 200 metres of high tide line, in the Bill, though present forms will be protected.

The regulation of coastal aquaculture farms is proposed to be carried out through the registration of these farms with the Aquaculture Authority. The majority of the people working in aquaculture are small farmers and keeping this in view the process of registration of the farms covering an area of two hectares or less than that has been simplified.

At last, I would like to inform you that with the passing of this law, which has already been passed by the Rajya Sabha, the uncertainty continuing in this sector for more than 8 years will come to an end and the twin objective of encouraging coastal aquaculture in a systematic manner and protecting the environment will be achieved.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill to provide for the establishment of a Coastal Aquaculture Authority for regulating the activities connected with coastal aquaculture in the coastal areas and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

SHRI K. S. RAO (Eluru): Sir, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Shri Sharad Pawar, for having brought this Bill to Parliament though after ten years.

Unfortunately, in the year 1996, when the issue was represented to the Supreme Court by some vested interests, the Supreme Court gave a judgement on December 11, 1996 that all the aquaculture industry including shrimp culture, pond culture, etc. operating or set up in the Coastal Regulation Zone as defined under the CRZ Notification shall be demolished and removed from the said area before March 31.

This coastal area is an area which is not touched by anybody. As the hon. Minister has said, 12 lakh hectares of coastal area which is saline, which has not been put to use for generations earlier, where there is not even a tree or human beings also except fishermen who are just staying in the coastal area was put to use. When this land was put to use by both the local fishermen and also by some farming community there, suddenly some people had come in the name of environment and ecology. They made a, big presentation in the Supreme Court which led to this judgement. It is a very surprising thing. I wish that every friend of mine sitting here must hear this. Birds of the same feather flock together.

The hon. Minister has said just now that a lot of fishermen's associations had made representations to me that their livelihood has gone and that this Bill has to be brought immediately to save their lives and also to improve their living standards. In this connection, the NDA Government had said that a lot of fishermen's associations had come and made representation to them that the entire ecology and environment of that area is getting spoiled. So, this Bill should not be introduced. The then hon. Prime Minister went to the extent of assuring them that it was to undo the Supreme Court Judgement that the United Front Government attempted to pass the Aquaculture Authority Bill in the Rajya Sabha on March 20, 1979. At that time, eminent Gandhian, Mr. Jagannathan, who was planning to sit on a fast against the Bill, met Shri Vajpayee and the then Leader of the Opposition along with Shri Sunderlal. Shri Vajpayee requested Shri Jagannathan not to sit on fast and had given him an assurance that the BJP will strongly oppose the Bill. To this end, Mr. George Fernandes and Shri Murl Manohar Joshi had also given similar assurances to the coastal community who are in Delhi. Unfortunately, the poor fishermen who are living in the coastal areas do not have the capacity even to travel up to Delhi. I have seen this with my own eyes as I have represented Machilipatnam Parliamentary Constituency thrice which has the coast line only. The poor fishermen never used to have an opportunity even to have clothes on their body.

I wish to bring to your kind notice one incident. In 1990 when this culture was brought in Machilipatnam, one

[Shri K. S. Rao]

day a fisherman was travelling in a bus. He was without a shirt. When he asked for a ticket in the city bus, he gave a note of Rs. 100 denomination. Immediately, the bus conductor asked him where did he get Rs.100. He replied that it is his own money. The bus conductor did not believe his words because he knew that a fisherman cannot have a note of Rs.100 denomination. Therefore, he made a police complaint that this man had either cheated somebody or had pickpocketed somewhere. Those were the days when the aquaculture was growing very fast and the poor fisherman could had the opportunity to make some money.

People who had never seen a note of ten-rupee denomination had, in fact, notes of hundred-rupee denominations with them. When that was the ground reality, people living in Delhi who are habituated to seeing only rich people and had never visited a coastal area and even did not have the least knowledge about the environment and ecological conditions prevalent in a coastal area and did not know whether it was going to affect any habitation adversely or not, made speeches and addressed Press Conferences on this issue. But only those people who understand the ground reality would know how much damage really that judgement of the Supreme Court and the inaction of the Government caused in the last ten years. Some of the over-zealous officers in the area had gone to the extent of even filling up the ponds. They used bulldozers to fill up the tanks where the shrimp was grown. In those days the value of the shrimp was 20 dollars per kg. But the affected people there had no opportunity to represent. There was an uproar and a reign of terror prevailed in that area. The affected people did not know what to do, whom to represent and who could help them and protect them in their distress. They did not do anything against the law. They by themselves did not raise those ponds. The Government had promoted them, the society encouraged them to use the land, that was not put to use all these years, to make their livelihood. They took loan from the banks. They invested a lot of money to raise the shrimps. At that stage, simply because of a judgement from the Supreme Court to this effect, without having gone into the details – whether this judgement would damage the cause of the farmers or would do good for them – some over-zealous officers acted on it blindly and ordered them to close the tanks and threatened them of closing the tanks. Heavy machinery was used to fill up the tanks. Nobody at that stage responded to the problems of these poor farmers. When that was the situation, great leaders here gave assurances in those days that they would see to it that this Bill was not passed.

Sir, I am happy that the hon. Minister, having understood the problems of the fishing community, has

brought this Bill to the House. The hon. Minister has mentioned that earning from coastal aquaculture has been to the tune of Rs. 6,800 crore by utilisation of only 14 per cent of the land that could be put to use. If the entire 100 per cent of land could be used for this purpose, then how much foreign exchange could we have earned? What amount of increase could have been there in the GDP? The hon. Finance Minister has to put in a Herculean effort to bring about an increase of 0.1 per cent in the GDP. But by simply encouraging coastal aquaculture half a per cent to one per cent increase in the GDP could easily have been there without affecting anybody adversely.

Sir, a professor can give a wonderful lecture on environment and ecology. I could have understood the merit of it if such an activity would have had adverse effects. The people who are living there are not doing anything wrong. But without having gone into the details of the case, just based on a judgement of the Supreme Court on this issue, some over-zealous officers acted on it; and some politicians being carried away by it gave assurances based on what they heard in the lecture.

Sir, in this context I would wish to bring some points to the notice of the hon. Minister. I am happy that the Government is not considering to prohibit the activity of aquaculture but only wish to regulate it. We are in support of regulating this activity of coastal aquaculture. It has to be regulated. There are very progressive farmers in those areas, I would say, that in some cases they are better than even scientists. But the unfortunate thing is that there is not proper infrastructure in those areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Rao, I would like you to please formulate your points briefly. The points you have to make, you may please formulate them briefly.

SHRI K. S. RAO: Sir, how much time have I got?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have already taken ten minutes. You have five more minutes.

SHRI K. S. RAO: Sir, problems the farmers face in that area are of bad seeds and bad feed.

So, Government has to bring some regulation in controlling the quality of the seeds and the feed. Actually, the virus that has come could not be prevented and it has caused extensive damage there. This has happened because extensive propaganda has not been done, wide publicity is not being given and enough research was not done in this line to protect the farming community from the virus. So, I request the hon. Minister to go into the details of bringing infrastructure into the area like providing

drainage facilities and sending the already used water or polluted water into the sea so that nobody is affected by it.

Similarly, there should be training centres for farmers for some farming techniques to avoid all these problems, I wish examples of those countries which have done very well earlier, like Vietnam, Hawaii, Thailand and Taiwan should be followed. They have actually got much more yield as they have done extensive campaign, But this campaign has to be done by the Government and cannot be expected by the poor farmers. So, I wish that the Government takes this initiative and goes in for extensive publicity.

There are a lot of fluctuations in the market price. Countries like America speak about globalisation but when they found that their national interest was being affected, they coined a term called anti-dumping duty. When our people are exporting shrimps to America, they impose anti-dumping duty at 14.1 per cent thereby once again our industry is put to trouble and inconvenience. Then, when prices come down, once again the farmers are put to trouble. Today, even that 14 per cent is not under cultivation because of this problem.

Sir, while telling you about these things, I want to mention some of the provisions that are made in the Bill. You have said that registration is a must. We agree that registration is a must. We do not deny that. But you said that when the farmer applies for registration, it is for the authority to approve or reject the registration. On what grounds will he decline the registration? Have you given any guidelines saying that he has to follow those guidelines and only then, he can accept or reject the registration? When a farmer, after investing lakhs of rupees in shrimp ponds which are very expensive, suddenly finds that registration is rejected at the whims and fancies of the officer, what will happen to his life? He will also start committing suicide then. So, you please see that guidelines are provided and after giving registration, for some reason, a farmer does not do farming for one year. It may be because prices are not encouraging. He may think that this year, he will not be able to go in for farming because prices are unremunerative or that sufficient sweet water of the river is not coming to mix it with salt water. In that case, he may not do farming. He may say that after a gap of one year of non-farming, the registration will be cancelled. In that case, what happens to the farmers?

Similarly, you said that without registration, if some farmer were to do cultivation, then penalty will be Rs. 1 lakh or three years imprisonment. Sir, this imprisonment is for whom? A farmer! For doing what? Farming! All right,

registration is required. But is it for a farmer owning half an acre or two, acres or 2000 acres? A corporate which owns a thousand acres does not mind paying Rs. 1 lakh or Rs. 2 lakh as penalty or sending any of their men to be imprisoned and then go on with their activities. So, please specify whether penalty is for the corporate sector or small farmers. You must exempt small farmers from this area. You cannot put small farmers in prison and make them suffer. They have not committed any crime.

You have also said that no court shall take cognizance of this crime unless the authority represents the court. That means you are still making the authority to misuse his power because there is no appellate authority. You please have some appellate authority. If some officer acts either due to his self-interest or corrupt practices, or as per his likes or dislikes, whims or fancies, then there must be an appellate authority so that justice will be done.

I do not say that you must do it right now because I do not want any further delay in passing of this Bill. But please bring forward these amendments at the earliest so that no farmer is punished.

My humble request in this regard is, please distribute these 12 lakh hectares of land which are lying idle, which were not used all these years, to the local people, be it fishermen, Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes or small farmers who are landless. They will get encouragement and they will work hard. You need not give them any subsidy later. You only motivate them to work and leave them on their own. We are bringing in so many proposals and schemes, like free food, jobs, etc. Instead of all these things, you can encourage people who are prepared to work through their sweat and raise crops worth millions of dollars and crores of rupees. It is our duty to encourage these people.

So, I sincerely, honestly and whole-heartedly congratulate the hon. Minister of Agriculture for bringing forward this Bill to Parliament, and for getting it passed in the Rajya Sabha. I am sure, this House will also pass this Bill. This will provide a big relief and this will infuse confidence in the poor fishermen who are living in the coastal areas. This will encourage the small farmers to go in a big way and take advantage of it. This will be done as per your guidelines and not against your guidelines. This can be done within the framework. Ten or twenty times of foreign exchange can be earned and Rs. 7,000 crore can become Rs.1,00,000 crore one day with your support. Do not be carried away by the feelings expressed by the earlier Governments or the Opposition or by the big speeches given by the environmentalists and economists.

SHRI SHAILENDRA KUMAR (Chail): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to you for allotting me time to speak on coastal aquaculture. Supporting this Bill I would like to associate myself with Shri Rao Saheb also said after dwelling upon this subject in that there is a need to formulate a comprehensive national policy for fishing in territorial waters only then our fisherman will be benefited. Fish to the tune of Rs. 6500 crore has been exported in the year 2004. There is a big scope of pisciculture in other places also apart from territorial waters. I would like to request to the hon'ble Minister to pay special attention to this so as to facilitate from various sources and profit in foreign exchange may be earned.

Sir, environmentalists are concerned about the method of fishing because during the course of fishing other aquatic creatures to the tune of 2 crore tonne also caught along with fish leading to possible marine ecological imbalance.

14.54 hrs.

(SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN *in the Chair*)

Sir, according to International laws, our fishermen can fish only upto 50 km in the sea from our sea coast. If they stray outside that limit danger from other countries is always there. So far as the production of fish is concerned we stand eighth in the world. In the production of fish India stands eighth after countries like China, Peru, Japan, Chili, Indonesia, Russia. It is a record in itself. The impending danger on environment has created a dangerous situation for the fishermen and consequently their profession is in jeopardy. Today we shall have to pay attention forwards them. Keeping in view the conservation of forests, environment and tourism about 20,000 fisherman have been displaced from islands in the country.

Today, there is a question of livelihood before them. Hon'ble Minister will have to pay special attention forwards the 20,000 fisherman displaced from islands they should at least be brought back to their profession. Whether it is in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh or Pakistan several of our fisherman are confined behind bars in the name of marine security. 120 Indian fisherman were imprisoned in Sri Lanka which were set free only when the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee intervened at the behest of Jay Lalita ji, the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu.

Similarly, there is Kutch island which is originally a part of India. But under the agreement it is not within our territory. There is a great scope of prawn culture there. I would like the hon'ble Minister to pay attention to this. So that we can export prawns because it is in great demand in foreign countries.

So far as fishing in coastal areas is concerned, it is decreasing. The fishes are facing the danger of being wiped out. Effluents of 35,000 industrial and hazardous factories are released there. Especially when oil leaks from large ships carrying oil through marine routes, it causes a big danger to environment. As a result fish are dying. Hon'ble Minister will have to pay attention to this also. Such a technology would have to be developed which could save the fish from big ship sailing in the sea.

My constituency is 120 Km. in length, though it is not related to coastal aquaculture but there is a big scope of fishing in Ganga-Yamuna rivers. He should also pay attention to it. In my constituency there is a lake covering five thousand acres of land. So much rain-water gets accumulated in this lake that if it is developed in a proper way we may get fish from this lake on a large scale and unemployed youth may also get employment.

I would like to draw the attention of hon'ble Minister towards several schemes sent to the government by the Uttar Pradesh Government. These schemes are pending with the Central Government. I want quick allocation of funds for them, only then there will be any benefit. For example there is Fisheries Development agency. An amount of Rs. 384.281 lakh was to be received under it but only an amount of Rs. 200 lakh has been released as centres share so far. Rs. 184.281 lakh is still outstanding. Under Fisheries training and promotion scheme an amount of Rs. 8 lakh is yet to be received, but it has been not released so far. Similarly there is a provision of Rs. 446.00 lakh under Machhua Awas Yojna, but an amount of Rs. 438.80 lakh has been revived as the first installment of centre's share. At present Rs. 100 lakh is yet to be released, so if it is released immediately, the problem of accommodation of fishermen can be solved.

There is a scheme to strengthen database information and networking. In the current financial year Rs.35.82 lakh was required but only Rs. 25 lakh has been released and an amount of Rs. 3.31 lakh is under consideration of the Government of India. I want Government of India to provide assistance of Rs. 7.01 lakh to the State Government at the earliest only then substantial success can be achieved.

Supporting this Bill I conclude and express my thanks for giving me an opportunity to speak on this subject.

[English]

DR. SEBASTIAN PAUL (Ernakulam): Sir, I am supporting the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill. The importance of the Bill is to be analysed in the context of

the situation in the country. India being the second largest producer of inland fish, the importance of aquaculture cannot be belittled. With an area of about 30,000 square kilometres under aquaculture, the industry is providing employment to three lakh workers.

15.00 hrs.

As such, steps should be taken to augment the yield up to the sustainable level in a responsible manner. It is the fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment. Agenda 21 - a global action plan outlining priority issues for the 21st century - was adopted at the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1992. It identified integrated management and sustainable development of the ocean and coastal zone as one of the essential components of the global life-supporting system. The ocean and the coastal zone together represent an interface between the land and the sea. It was in this context that the Supreme Court in 1996 ordered the removal of all aquaculture units and shrimp culture ponds operating in the coastal regulation zone. The only activity permitted by the Court was traditional and improved additional aquaculture.

The Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill, as presented before this House, is not intended to negate the mandate of the apex court. The Bill presented after prolonged deliberation with the intent of saving employment and investment will ensure sustainable development of coastal aquaculture. The apprehension of traditional fishing community, NGOs and coastal agriculturists has been allayed to a reasonable extent. The boom in aquaculture has been spectacular in the developing countries, including India. Today aquaculture accounts for over 30 per cent of total world fish production.

However, the mushrooming of shrimp aquaculture farms in the vicinity of the coasts is causing so much sea and groundwater pollution, necessitating the intervention of the Supreme Court for the removal of all aquaculture farms within 500 metres of the high tide line. However, in the proposed legislation the prohibited limit is reduced to 200 metres from the high tide line and existing farms have been totally exempted from the distance stipulation. Such exemption and relaxation are totally unwarranted. If the exclusion is necessitated by circumstances, strict guidelines shall be issued for the enforcement of the spirit of the legislation. Drawal of groundwater in the 200-500 metre zone for drinking, horticulture, agriculture and fisheries purposes can be permitted only when done manually through ordinary wells. As part of the measures to control marine pollution from land based activities, steps

should be taken to prevent aquaculture waste reaching the sea. India harbours some of the best mangroves in the world and these occur all along the coastline. They stabilise the shoreline and act as a bulwark against encroachment by the sea. Coastal aquaculture activities shall not end in the destruction of precious mangroves. The proposed aquaculture authority has power to regulate the construction and operation of aquaculture farms within the coastal areas; to ascertain their environmental impact; and to order removal or demolition if they cause pollution. It is good to that extent. Let us hope that teeth given to the authority are sharp enough to bite. With this hope, Sir, I support this Bill.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I express my gratitude to the Hon. Minister for taking up the long pending Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill. It is an important step in the direction of providing employment and progress of the coastal people engaged in pisciculture which will lead to economic growth of the country. I express my gratitude for this.

Sir, though a small Bill, it is an important one. It is necessary to get this Bill passed to fulfil the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court and remove the road blocks. This Bill will enable a great number of the poor and the unemployed to get employment. The people living in the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which is spread over 12 lakh hectares of land area, earn their livelihood through pisciculture. As per the estimate of the previous financial year exports worth Rs.6000 crore were made. This is a matter of concern that a small country like Vietnam is competing with us in terms of production. China also has a finger in this pie. In my opinion there is a need to increase efficiency and extend help to these people, otherwise we will not get the competitive edge.

Sir, our country is called the land of farmers but there are no arrangements for raising two crops in places where only one crop is being produced. As stated earlier the people living in 12 lakh hectare of coastal area are very poor. It is necessary to help them to the maximum, to increase their production, to encourage them so that the economy of our country which is largely dependent on farmers, may be strengthened.

Recently there was a discussion regarding the decline in our agricultural production. This is a bad omen for our country. If the problems regarding farmers are not tackled we will have to face even more crises in the future. It is my belief that we have to look after our farmers if we

[Shri Ram Kripal Yadav]

wish to strengthen our economy. It is certain that if we do not give help to our farmers then in the present scenario of continuously increasing unemployment and population explosion and decrease in the employment opportunities we will have to adopt new measures. We should take measures to provide employment and strengthen our economy. The hon. Minister is trying to ensure that pollution is removed through this Bill but the government will have to take firm measures to fulfil this guarantee. Steps will have to be taken for upliftment of the coastal population, to ensure their development and give them suggestions. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude. Your state is not a coastal state.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am from Bihar which has many rivers. Every year. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: You mean to say that riverside also is a coastal area.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV: Prawn farming is done there. More than half of Bihar remains submerged in water. Therefore, there is a lot of scope for pisciculture. Ganga river is changing its course but Kosi, Kamla Balan and Bagmati river waters wreak havoc there. The hon. Minister for Agriculture is aware of the plight of the farmers. I request that apart from coastal areas, beneficial steps should be taken for the farmers in our areas too. This will strengthen our economy.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, our UPA Government has brought this Bill. The previous government could not bring it. The previous government did not talk about farmers. It was not interested in introducing this Bill. If the opposition had been positively oriented towards the Bill then it would not have boycotted the House. They would have provided positive inputs by taking part in the discussion. The government has brought this bill in accordance with Supreme Court guidelines. This Bill has enabled the government to increase the scope of employment opportunities for the unemployed youth who reside in coastal areas. It is the era of globalisation and the foreign companies are competing with us. The government will have to take concrete steps

to provide a competitive environment. As I have stated earlier we are earning Rs.6000 crore of foreign exchange which needs to be increased. This will encourage the farmers.

Mr. Chairman, I support the bill and thank the hon. Minister for bringing this bill in the House in order to increase employment opportunities for the unemployed youth of the country.

SHRI ILYAS AZMI (Shahabad): Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is true that my parliamentary constituency is far away from the coastal area but I am listening it first time in my life and that too through the Supreme Court that fishes can also cause harm to the environment. Due to a few lapses on our part and the bureaucracy, as well, the judiciary is interfering in almost every matter, a situation which was unimaginable just 10 to 20 years ago. I congratulate Shri Sharad Pawar ji for showing courage at this point of time and for bringing such a bill so as to check this unnecessary interference which is becoming a hurdle in the path of progress.

After wheat, fish is the second most sought after staple diet of human beings through out the world. Therefore, maximum production of fish is our national requirement. In coastal areas, fish production can be carried out at a very large scale. But my constituency is located far away from the coast. If the government and the hon'ble Minister of Agriculture pay attention, then fishes better than sea-fishes can be produced at a large scale in big lakes there by spending a little amount. Now, if some one says tomorrow that cultivation of wheat also causes harm to the environment, then will our Supreme Court declare the farming of wheat as an industry? It is a subject to be pondered over and I am not interested in making a long speech on it. I just want to request the hon'ble Minister of Agriculture to pay some attention to those areas also which are away from sea but where better varieties of fishes can be produced at a large scale. In Uttar Pradesh, even today better varieties of fishes get produced at a very large scale by itself and if we try, we can raise both its quality and quantity.

Without elaborating further, I once again congratulate Shri Sharad Pawar ji for bringing this bill. I would like that in future also, this government will, through enacting laws, try to check such unnecessary interferences or decisions as may create obstacles in the way of progress and production of the country. With these words, I conclude my speech.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, there is a provision in the Bill

that representation is given to coastal States only by rotation. In the Coastal Aquaculture Authority which is to be formed, as per the provisions of this Bill, only coastal States are representatives to the Authority by rotation. Now, interior States are not given representation because they do not come within the purview of this Bill. Am I correct?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): Yes, Sir. The Bill is restricted to coastal area.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPA (Trichur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to support this Bill, and I congratulate the UPA Government and more specially the hon. Minister, Shri Sharad Pawar for bringing forward this Bill because it has been lying in hibernation for the last eight years.

It is something like Ahalya Moksha as described in our Puranas. Yes, the reasons are obvious. So, I congratulate you because you have now brought this Bill which will create conditions for our pisciculture to develop faster. Though our export earning from fishery comes to more than Rs.6,000 crore, I may say, we are still at an infant state as an industry, as a farming area to develop. It is because in the coastal area, according to the statistics and many people have said also that 12-14 lakh hectares of land could be developed. We have developed roughly 14 per cent of that. So, with this, if we can provide employment to nearly four lakh people and earn an income of more than Rs.6,000 crore, once this Bill is made as an Act, it will give an impetus for further development, more employment and more wealth in the country. So, that is the reason that we support it.

Also, one should know that basically this is a small farmers' business because 91 per cent of the farmers engaged in this aquaculture have only less than two hectares of land and only six per cent of the farmers are middle-class with a land holding between two and five hectares. The big sharks are only three per cent. So, it is basically a small man's occupation. It provides employment; it generates wealth; and it should create conditions so that our environment in the coastal area also is protected.

So, while supporting this, I must say that there are two aspects which should have been included in the Bill. If you could bring amendment later, it would be all right. Clause 11 deals with the duties of the Coastal Aquaculture Authority. The Authority may make any inspection, survey, etc. I would like to add to it, research and development on sustainable basis and environment friendly aquaculture.

Only then, probably we can see that this becomes a sustainable occupation which will be environment friendly. For that, this new Authority should be entrusted with the task of taking up research and development and training.

There is one more aspect that I would like to add there, that is, to ensure supply of quality seeds and quality feeds which are very important. According to the statistics, it is said that at present more than 50 per cent of the seeds available for the cultivation shrimps is substandard. Similarly, the feeds available are also substandard and toxic. So, if this Authority is entrusted with these two jobs, then probably you are asking this Authority to do a complete job. It will not only do inspection, give certificates and all that but also ensure that the industry is sustained.

The industry remains environment friendly if good feeds and seeds are provided. So, I would like these two things to be taken into account. Another doubt that I have, which has been also expressed by other speakers, is with regard to clauses 15 and 22, wherein the provisions were: "The court cannot intervene with the decisions taken by the Authority". I can understand that. But how is it going to affect it when bureaucratic decisions are taken or decisions are taken with vested interest? If it cannot be challenged in a court of law, probably people will be put in a great difficulty.

So, I would request the Minister to look into that matter whether clauses 15 and 22 need some kind of improvement so that we assure a protection to the aggrieved. These are some of the issues I would like to highlight. On the whole, I support this Bill because at the beginning I cited the reasons. I wish that this Bill would be implemented soon.

With these words, I conclude.

SHRI M. M. PALLAM RAJU (Kakinada): Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill, 2005. I think that it is a very important Bill. It has wide reaching consequences for the protection of our ecology, for the protection of a large number of small and marginal farmers, for the welfare of a large unorganised workforce that is associated with the industry, and lastly but most important, on the aspect of economic health of the nation through the substantial contribution of our seafood exports.

I come from the coastal constituency of Kakinada where Aquaculture is extensively practised, and from the Godavari district where shrimp farming and pisciculture have contributed towards the economic transformation of the region. I am happy to contribute my thoughts during

[Shri M.M. Pallam Raju]

the debate on this important Bill. I have been a ringside observer to the growth of the industry, its successes and the trials that this industry has gone through.

Sir, to go into a bit of history, the activity of shrimp farming kicked off in a big way in the early nineties after its commercial farming successes in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. Small farmers with small tracts of agricultural land, which were in close proximity to the sea, got into the activity, as it was important for an appropriate mix of fresh water and sea water for the substances of the shrimp seed which would grow into shrimp, and which could be exploited commercially. There were great success stories of unimaginable profits and the shrimp farmers saw a lot of quick wealth all across the States that were quick to exploit this new field.

This new wealth generation opportunity encouraged a lot of small farmers to jump into the fray, in the process leading to large areas of good agricultural land being converted into aquaculture ponds, misuse of agricultural infrastructure like letting out this pond drainage into the agricultural drains thereby polluting agricultural drains and other unhealthy practices that had a detrimental effect on the healthy agricultural environment, and the fragile marine ecology of coastal areas across the country. Large companies also jumped into the activity for the reason of profits.

Subsequent to this came the opportunity to set up shrimp hatcheries for producing the shrimp seed. Here again, the large returns prompted a large number of entrepreneurs to enter the field without sensitivity to the coastal or ecological concerns. In spite of the presence of the CRZ regulations, and ecological concerns, the returns of the industry blinded several entrepreneurs to violate CRZ norms, and other norms.

The other opportunity that also came up simultaneously was the feed that was needed for nurturing the shrimp to ensure healthy growth and size which fetched a premium from export markets worldwide, primarily the USA, Japan and Europe. However, all the seasons of the crop did not ensure great yields. There were several failures due to entrepreneurs not following healthy farming practices; and they wanted larger yields through higher stocking of the ponds thereby leading to diseases and pollution of the entire stock. Freezing plants were another opportunity for that the trade threw up for ensuring proper packaging and storing of shrimp for the export markets.

All the above activities led to a lot of direct employment and indirect employment, both in the educated

workforce and in the unorganised labour. A lot of fishermen living in proximity to ponds, hatcheries and freezing plants got gainfully employed, leading to alternative means of livelihood other than fishing activity in the sea. However, the industry has had its own share of problems and we saw the Supreme Court order which had a detrimental effect on the growth of the industry. In such cases, we tend to ignore greater polluting industries like the ship-breaking industry, which have far more devastating consequences on the ecology of our coastline. Against this, we should see this trade in proper view and give it its due support.

Somewhere down the line, the industry has also suffered, taking a big blow from the decrease in exports mainly because of the reason of farmers, packagers and exporters not taking adequate measures for ensuring international norms and standards for export quality. The current crisis that the industry faces today is the usage of anti-biotics which the US market is resisting. So, it is these things that should also be kept in mind when we try to encourage the industry.

Currently, the average production in India is about 100,000 metric tonnes of shrimp per annum, contributing to about Rs. 3,000-6,000 crore exports annually, the second foreign exchange earner after IT exports. This is where the trade potential and opportunity lies that the nation cannot afford to lose. The huge employment that the industry is generated is another strong justification why this industry should be supported and encouraged.

Currently, there are about 12 lakh to 15 lakh unskilled labourers in this sector, primarily in the rural areas. While we attempt to pass this Bill and implement it, we have to keep in mind that this opportune area needs to be encouraged for the economic benefits that it presents to the nation. Only a fraction of the land available for agriculture is currently being exploited and a lot could be done for increasing the usage of land. Currently, about 150,000 hectares of land is being utilised as against available land of 12 lakh hectares. Again, most of this land is not suitable for other agricultural purposes. So, we are putting land that is not suitable for other purposes to productive utility and this should be encouraged. Against this backdrop, I think, the Bill provides a great opportunity and I would like to offer the following suggestions.

It should be kept in mind that the livelihood of a lot of small and marginal farmers is at stake; that there is a large number of direct employment and indirect employment that the activity has generated; that it is absolutely necessary to protect the fragile marine ecology along the coast, which is so important for the livelihood of the fishing community

which lives along the coast of India; that prudent judgement should be made regarding conversion of existing agricultural land for aquaculture; that punishment should be severe for violating ecological and environmental norms; that we should encourage the conditions for strengthening the infrastructure necessary for maintaining an efficient and effective cold chain for maintaining the quality of exports; and that suitable credit should be made available to make this industry grow and sustain in a healthy manner which would lead to its healthy growth.

I feel that credible entrepreneurs from the industry should also be appointed to the Authority to give an empathetic angle to the industry.

Again, we have a good body, called the MPEDA, which should be strengthened for effective and efficient dissemination of advice and information. That will lead to quality of the exports. The effective monitoring of the quality of the seed and the feed by the Authority at the usage level would go a long way in ensuring the quality of the end product. I think, that is very important. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI M. M. PALLAM RAJU: Sir, I am concluding.

The Authority should be an enabler of healthy aquaculture practices for the proper usage of land and towards contributing to the strengthening of the economy. It is important to enable and to regulate this activity in a positive manner and in a constructive manner. So, this Bill is an important first step in this right direction.

So, with these few words, I support this Bill.

PROF. M. RAMADASS (Pondicherry): Sir, I rise to support this Bill on behalf of our Party, PMK. The objects of this Bill are excellently framed and the provisions contained in this Bill go to help the development of one of the vital sectors of the economy, namely, the fishing sector, which is next only to agriculture in terms of employment, livelihood, exports and a number of other forward and backward linkages. Therefore, this Bill now seeks to provide a protection to this industry by creating a Regulatory Authority.

One of the most important reasons as to why we support this Bill is that the Government has been extremely responsive in accepting the recommendations of the Supreme Court and has brought this Bill in consonance with the judgement of the Supreme Court dated 11th December, 1996. Therefore, we are able to satisfy the considerations of the Supreme Court with regard to environment.

Secondly, this Bill strikes a nice compromise or a balance between economic considerations and ecological considerations. As the House is aware and as the Hon. Chairman is aware, the shrimp industry in India has been making very rapid strides. As other Hon. Members have pointed out, the contributions made by this industry have been immense. But, unfortunately, as in every other sphere of the Indian economy, the development in this country has always had its own disaster. The more you develop the economy either in agriculture or in fisheries or any industry, you get the offshoot of it in terms of environmental hazard and this industry was no exception to this trend. A large number of chemicals, which are used in this industry have polluted the environment and the environmentalists have taken up this issue to a level beyond proportion. Therefore, the question before the Government was to encourage this activity or to end this activity. Now, both options would have been disastrous. Therefore, the Government took what is called a 'gold-mean' approach that we are not ending this, but we are mending this profession. So, this Bill tries to provide a balanced economic development, as portrayed by the shrimp, aquaculture development and also the environmental consideration and that is the greatest utility of this Bill.

The third important feature of this Bill is that it provides autonomous power, autonomous character to the Regulatory Authority, which implies that no government, no environmental organisation or no other group can intervene in the activities of this Authority. The composition of Authority is such that it includes all the experts who are concerned in the development of the shrimp culture. Therefore, we can get the best advice and try to promote this industry from a sustainable point of view, from the point of view of the long-run ecological and economic development.

So, the autonomous character of this Bill is so fascinating that it has to be approved. Now, there are many more merits of this Bill which I do not want to elaborate, but at the same time, I would like to put forth some of the views which can be considered by the hon. Minister of Agriculture, who has been kind enough to bring this Bill and to give focus to it.

Now, I come to one of the important issues with regard to composition of the authority. It is true that all the concerned people are there, but two groups, which have a say in this matter, in the matter of development of shrimp culture as far as the coastal areas are concerned, have been left out of the authority. For example, a large number

[Prof. M. Ramadass]

of small farmers are involved in this profession and a large number of fishermen, who are living in the coastal areas, are going to be affected by this development. Who is represented in this authority? You have got experts. You have got representatives of the States and Union Territories. You have got people from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment. You have got everybody, but who will be able to place before the Committee the problems faced by the small and marginal farmers in the aquaculture industry and who will represent the views of the fishermen? Therefore, I would urge upon the Government to provide some representation to the farmers in aquaculture as well as somebody from the fishing industry.

The second important thing is that the thousand-metre regulation, condition has to be looked in or has to be revisited after the tsunami which has brought devastating effect on the soil conditions in the coastal areas. Sir, you know that the Union Territory of Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Andhra Pradesh are coastal in character and have got a lot of shrimp activities, aquacultural activities. Those activities have been affected by the tsunami waves. Consequently, the salinity, the soil fertility in these areas has been affected. So, it has to be looked into by the Government whether this thousand-metre regulation would still be relevant and valid.

The third important thing is that there is an omnibus provision in the Bill which says that no suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against the Central Government or the authority or the Chairperson and other members of the authority and so on and so forth. Given the past experiences, I am afraid that this provision would give unwieldy powers to this authority to act according to its own whims and fancies. We do not have dearth of examples in this country where Commissions and Committees have acted in contravention of public interest. I would only feel that some kind of an amendment should be brought to this clause and we should not vest with the authority enormous powers. This is my suggestion.

Since 90 per cent of the farmers are small and marginal farmers here, why do you not think of forming co-operatives for them? Just as we have farmers' service co-operatives, why are small co-operative groups could not be formed so that you can provide all assistance in cash and kind through these co-operatives and relieve the farmers from the financial distress or financial burden which they may have? Once you remove this, they would be able to contribute a greater deal.

Then, there is the question of management of

aquaculture. It requires specialised skills, it requires acumen on the part of the people so that the environmental hazards do not occur. The use of chemicals and the application of various other devices may create or may require specific talents and specific management techniques. The Fisheries Departments of the Union Territory and of States today are not capable of providing this support to the farmers. Even the NGOs are not so much specialised in this area to provide this input to the farmers. If this safeguard is not provided, perhaps the aquaculture industry will face a long-term problem. That is why, I would feel that the Central Government, through the State Government, should help or encourage formation of self-help groups among the small farmers.

In Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the Government is encouraging the formation of aqua clubs which are catching the attention of the people as it renders a lot of assistance to the people. Why do we not have this as a universal phenomenon and the Government comes forward with the scheme of providing aqua clubs to the people?

Lastly, the Government, at any rate, should be very careful to see that the multinationals do not enter in any form or guise, either in terms of technical support or in terms of financial guidance, into Indian coastal areas and exploit the marine products or wealth of this country.

Let us not experiment with the British method of exploiting India as it would result in resource drain from this country in the years to come. Therefore, the Government should take all these factors into account to provide a sustainable basis for the development of aquaculture in this country. Therefore, I wholeheartedly support this Bill.

DR. BABU RAO MEDIYAM (Bhadrachalam): Sir, thank you very much. I rise to support the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill 2005.

As we all know, the aquaculture industry is growing, and it is providing employment not only to the farmers, but also to the local fishermen, scientists, biochemists, etc. In our State, Andhra Pradesh, it has spread over seven districts. The aquaculture farming gives us a lot of foreign exchange. But as there was no such Act, the aquaculture farmers were incurring losses. They were also getting cheated by a lot of moneylenders.

I want to cite an example. In July last, about 30 aquaculture farmers came from Nellore District — where the aquaculture farming is abundant — to Delhi. They came to Delhi to meet the hon. Minister of Commerce because a

virus, infection, in the year 2002, had caused huge loss to the farmers. The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), which is located in Kerala, had sanctioned them some beneficiary amount. Almost all the DDs and cheques were prepared, but the previous Government stopped it on the plea that the elections were going to take place. Even 10 months, after the election, the cheques are not issued to the farmers. They came to meet the hon. Minister of Commerce, and gave him a representation on this issue. They also gave representations, through me and other hon. Members from Andhra Pradesh, to the Ministry of Commerce, but still they did not get it. Therefore, these events would not occur with the enactment of such a Bill by us.

Aquaculture farming also results in ecological imbalances. The most prominent hazards are salinity of ground water, barrenness of the land, scarcity of drinking water in the areas where it is being done, etc. Therefore, I demand a provision to be included in the Bill to protect the ecology from these hazards.

On the other hand, some provisions should be made in the Bill to provide support to the aquaculture farmers, who are facing a lot of trouble. The support must be in the following areas. Firstly, we must provide them with some bank credit because they are small and marginal farmers. They must be provided with bank credit to purchase land, pesticides, feed, antibiotics, etc. Secondly, they must be covered under some insurance scheme like LIC, etc. Otherwise, the farmers are at a loss if there is a virus attack or some such thing. Therefore, some provision must be made to cover the aquaculture farmers under some sort of an insurance scheme. Thirdly, technical support should be provided to them from the scientific angle. Fourthly, they must be provided with a good amount of feed, pesticides and antibiotics at cheaper rates.

They must be provided with cold storage facilities to preserve their produce because they are producing very high quality of prawns. Each prawn almost weighs about a kilogram. They are producing such good quality prawns, and they must be provided with some facilities to preserve their produce and also help them by providing better marketing facilities. Since 90 per cent of the produce is exported or marketed outside, they must be provided with good marketing facilities.

SHRI J. M. AARON RASHID (Periyakulam): I rise to support this Bill. Our UPA Chairperson and our Leader, Madam Sonia Gandhi, visited all the coastal areas affected by Tsunami. I am thankful to the Chairperson, the Government, and our hon. Prime Minister who has given

more than Rs. 5,000 crore as compensation to the affected fishermen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you not speaking in Tamil? You have given notice to speak in Tamil. No doubt, you can speak in English.

SHRI J. M. AARON RASHID: I will speak in Tamil.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can continue your speech in English. It was written here that you will be speaking in Tamil. You can continue your speech in English. There is no harm in it.

SHRI J. M. AARON RASHID: The wastelands which are 500 metres away from the seaside should be given to fishermen families who are below the poverty line.

The wasteland should also be given to the self-help groups, local societies, and to those who are living in that area for more than two decades so that the unemployment problem in the coastal areas will be solved, and it will also fetch good foreign exchange revenue. Secondly, bank loans should be given to fishermen in the coastal areas on easy installment basis. Thirdly, environmental impact study should be conducted. Research and periodic inspection of the coastal areas should also be conducted.

The farmers who are cultivating shrimps are using improved technology for increased production, but they should not use 20 banned antibiotics, as directed by the hon. Supreme Court. To monitor this, the State and Central Governments should set up a monitoring committee in the coastal areas where aquaculture farms are located. The Government wastelands, like salt-pans, mangroves, forest lands earmarked by the Government for the villagers' common use, should be given to the fishermen families, who are below the poverty line, to do aquaculture. In this way, the problem of unemployment and poverty could be solved to some extent.

Big business houses are occupying the lands of the poor fishermen by giving small loans and advances to them. They are taking away their lands and constructing big ponds, each occupying 2.5 acres, which is causing problems to the local people. These ponds are located just 50 metres away from the source of their livelihood and their houses. Moreover, the water in the 15' x 20' well, that was dug up to draw water for their daily use, has become polluted. Therefore, the CRZ notification that prescribes the minimum limit of 1,000 metres should not only be implemented but should also be monitored. The ponds should not come up near the highways or housing areas because the chemicals used in these ponds produce bad

[Shri J.M. Aaron Rashid]

smell. The Government has to ensure that groundwater is not polluted in the villages where these fishermen live, otherwise it may cause problems from, the point of their livelihood and also the availability of drinking water to them.

The Government should identify prospective lands for the farmers for prawn and aquaculture, and hatcheries. Small fishermen catch fish in Pullicat and Buckingham lakes. The Government should see that wastewater from the ponds is not let out just like that. Wastewater from the farm lands goes via these bunds into the sea. Because of this, trees in those areas become dry. In those areas, coconut trees, palm trees, mango trees are dying, due to excess of water logging. People who have lost their land and trees should be given compensation by the Government. Used water should be treated properly and sent back to the sea through pipelines.

Garbage generated by the hatcheries is highly hazardous and that should also be properly disposed of. I would, once again, request the Government to look into all the pros and cons of this issue. This sector earns a lot of foreign exchange for the Government. Currently It is earning about Rs. 7,000 crore, and it may reach up to Rs.1 lakh crore. So, the Government should lay more emphasis on this industry. The Government should give importance to the small farmers and below the poverty line families living on the coastline of this country.

DR. SUJAN CHAKRABORTY (Jadavpur): Sir, this is a very important discussion. Though we have had to wait for a long time for so many years, a discussion at the introduction stage of the Bill is quite due. While I generally support the Bill, there are some specific issues which should be looked into very categorically.

The Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill obviously will interfere in the entire coastal management processes and procedures that we are having. Aquaculture is definitely an agri-industry in the country, the potential of which is enormous. There is no doubt about it. That is more particularly so in our country because we are having a very huge coastline and vast coastal areas. Bio-diversity in the coastal areas is also huge. So, the issue of specific documentation of flora and fauna and how those can be sustained along side should be properly planned. Hence, the Authority must take a holistic, comprehensive view of the entire issue.

There is no doubt that basically it will help in developing effectively in the field of economy. Simultaneously, the question of maintenance of environment is a very serious issue and a serious concern. All of us know

that marine biology these days is a very specific and specialised subject. Many countries in the world are now concentrating on research and development in marine biology. Therefore, I propose that in the entire approach, functioning and everything of Aquaculture Authority, the question of scientific research and development is a continuous process and it should be maintained side by side.

Since this is a very lucrative industry, exports are very important. Some of my friends were referring to MPEDA. I believe MPEDA should also be augmented in proper fashion.

16.00 hrs.

Since it is a lucrative industrial business, from that sense, the question of aggression from MNCs may come. We should see as to how to checkmate that aggression. This is obviously very important. For over-profiting, what happens is that most of the times, other areas and normal land also get engulfed by these big companies. Hence, the question of salinity and desalination will be a very serious concern and the same should definitely be looked into specifically.

From the viewpoint of over-exploitation of the marine products, I would like to categorically say that chemical degradation is a continuous phenomena, on which we should keep an eye from the very beginning.

Multinationals generally use big trawlers. We should properly regulate them in a coordinated manner. As they see aquaculture from the angle of profit, even the fish seedlings are getting destroyed. As a result, our country may lose tremendously in future. Hence, I would suggest some three or four points.

The question of involving farmers along the coastline is to be seen or looked into in a priority manner. In this area, we have to arrange cooperatives of fishermen and self-help groups, provide them bank credit and get them remunerative prices. By this way, an important content of our unemployment problem can be tackled if we undertake it in a categorical and planned manner.

Providing complete communication in the coastal and remote areas would help them scientifically at the time of disasters. Now a days, we are talking of effective disaster management and the same should be provided.

My specific suggestion is in regard to the question of seed and feed. I would like to know as to how to arrange and manage seed and feed gainfully. This aspect should be looked into categorically.

In the Bill, representation of the farmers is not there. Representation of the farmers is a must. Otherwise, their interests cannot be safeguarded. Like the importance of research and development, scientific management and environmental maintenance, similarly, involvement of fishermen is important. Fishermen should also be involved in the Central policy-making.

I do not see any reason as to why a retired High Court Judge is a must for the Chairmanship. Why is it so? A person with a scientific bent of mind or an all-knowing person probably can take up the task, regulate and look into aquaculture from a scientific point of view and from the views of coastal aquaculture, science and environment. Taking the above into consideration, the Authority should be composed. With these words, I thank you, Sir, and conclude my speech.

SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI (Bapatla): Sir, I rise to participate in the discussion on the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill, 2005. The Supreme Court in its judgement in the year 1996 had identified and recognised aquaculture to be an industry and directed that no aquaculture activity should be grounded in the coastal area. The Court further directed that an Aquaculture Authority needs to be established through a proper legislative intervention which would look into the regularisation of the setting up of aquaculture in the coastal area. The Supreme Court, just by the stroke of a pen, as it were, had decided to ban all aquaculture farms, whether intensive, semi-intensive, extensive or semi-extensive, in the coastal regulatory zone. It permitted the traditional and the improved traditional aquaculture. Because of this judgement by the Supreme Court, a lot of people were thrown out of employment, almost around three lakh people were to be thrown out of employment who were totally and solely dependent on the aquaculture activity. The land use for these aquaculture activities was the saline coastal belt which could not be utilized for any other activity. In order to safeguard the interests of these workers and to promote the growth of the aquaculture industry, it was very important that this aquaculture industry should be protected in consistence with the safeguarding of the environment.

Indian marine product sector has been assured a place of pride in the global economy and the country has now become the second largest fish producer in the world. The fishing resource in India is indeed a very high bonanza for setting up a giant aqua industry in our country. By virtue of its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, our country comes under the influence of two monsoons which bring in sufficient water to replenish brackish and salt water bodies which are used for aqua farming. Also, we have a

lot of coastal marshy areas, coastal lagoons, and shallow inland water which can be used for the aqua farming also. If the Government takes appropriate steps to augment the aquaculture, this can earn a very high foreign exchange. This can also create a lot of employment for lots of people living in the coastal belt. Therefore, I would welcome this Bill. However, according to me, there are certain grey areas which I would like the Government to give a little thought to.

Under clause 4, the proposed Bill provides for the composition of a Coastal Aqua Authority and the appointment of a Chairperson and the members. Here, there has been no representation from the fishing community at all to safeguard their interest. A majority of them are small farmers. Their interest needs to be safeguarded. Therefore, there should be necessarily a representative from the fishing community, just as my colleague Prof. Ramadass had pointed out.

Secondly, the Chairperson of the proposed Authority is either to be a sitting or a serving Judge. Basically, the rationale behind this is not very clear. However, since problems of aquaculture are of national importance and they have international ramifications, the Chairperson of the Authority should either be a retired or serving Judge of either the High Court or the Supreme Court and preferably the Supreme Court.

In clause 11, sub-clause 2, when the Authority orders for the removal or demolition of an aquaculture farm, compensation has to be paid and it has to be decided by a person to be appointed by the Authority who is endowed with the power of a District Magistrate. Instead of getting somebody from outside into the Authority and then endowing him with magisterial power, it would be more apt if the District Magistrate of that area or any other District Magistrate himself is bestowed with these powers so that this would ensure credibility to the arbitrator also.

Next Point is about authorisation under clause 12. It talks about authorising any person to inspect any coastal aquaculture land, pond, pen or enclosure. But care should be taken so that this provision does not ensure ushering in of the Inspector raj again because this will give rise to a lot of corruption and bribery. This will act as an impediment to the growth of aquaculture.

Now, clause 13 sub-clause 8(a) says that no coastal aquaculture shall be carried on within two hundred metres from High Tide Lines. Sir, according to Coastal Regulation Zone, no activity should take place within the 500-metre band along the coastal area. So, this needs to be looked

[Shrimati D. Purandeswari]

into. I think it is very essential that we should again look into this 200 metre norm, especially that we were hit by the Tsunami on 26th December, 2004, and consider the 500-metre norm. I think that it is very essential.

The Supreme Court Judgment dated 11-12-1996 directed that no shrimp culture or shrimp-farm should be constructed at a distance of about 1000 metres of Chilika or Pulicat lake to safeguard the environment. For this, I find no mention in the Bill at all. So, I think that basically all the aqua-farms should be located at a distance from all such sanctuaries to protect them.

There have also been attempts to close down the research organisations spread all over the coastal areas so as to bring them under one body. I think that it is very essential to retain them as and where they are. It is because they would be then easily accessible to the people living along the coastal areas, especially taking into consideration the requirements like good feed, good seed and all these things.

Both promotional and regulatory, activities have been entrusted to the Coastal Aquaculture Authority. These two activities need totally different mindsets. When you look at promotional activity, you need to have a positive outlook. Whereas in case of regulatory activities, there is more of a negative outlook. So, it is very essential that both these activities are under different bodies. I should be very ideal if the regulatory activities continue under the present authority and have a promotional authority to look into promotional activities. This should be very ideal. This would definitely facilitate the growth of our aquaculture.

With these few words, I support the Bill introduced today.

SHRI S. K. KHARVENTHAN (Palani): Sir, I rise to support this Bill.

Sir, with respect to aquaculture and sericulture, the hon. Supreme Court has given clear directions as to what steps are to be taken to safeguard the interests of the public, how public demands have to be formed and aquaculture to be developed.

Actually, Sir, in Tamil Nadu, from Madras to Cape Comerin nearing to 500 kms. of coastal area, Nagapattinam, Karaikal, Thanangambady, Poraiyar, Thanjavur, Pudukottai, Tuticorin, Kanya Kumari, Kancheepuram and Pazhaverkadu - the people were obstructed in so many places for the reason the wastes are coming from these kinds of industries affecting the drinking water, particularly borewell due to chemicals. A number of chemicals were

identified by the hon. Supreme Court. It also banned nearly 20 chemicals. Another important thing is that the farmers are afraid of this development of aquaculture and sericulture. In this area, the coconut, banana and all plants are affected. Moreover, they were purchasing the agricultural lands at lesser prices and using them for this purpose. They are afraid that their houses and lands would be affected. There are so many Government lands that can be used for this purpose. Between Nagapattinam and Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu, so many agitations were there, people were arrested and cases were also filed against them for opposing this thing.

Aquaculture and shrimp culture are other industries that are giving more money to the Government. One such variety is available in Rameshwaram. "It is TIGER PRAWN." They are exporting very large number of varieties throughout the world. It would give a very good income. This Bill will go in solving all such problems as per hon. Supreme Court directions. Hence, I welcome this Bill.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU (Srikakulam): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to support this Bill wholeheartedly on behalf of the Telugu Desam Party.

In our country, we have a long coastline. In Andhra Pradesh also, we have more than 1,000 kms. of long coastline.

This Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha seven years ago. It had lapsed. Again a new Bill was introduced. When the UF Government was in power, Shri Chaturanan Misra was the Agriculture Minister. He introduced this Bill. When NDA was in power, Shri Ajit Singh was the Agriculture Minister. He tried to introduce this Bill. Anyway, the present Government has brought forward this Bill. This will safeguard the interests of lakhs of small and marginal fishermen families and also the industry.

According to me, we have to protect the coastal environment, the livelihood of lakhs of people who are living in the coastal area.

16.16 hrs.

(SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV *in the Chair*)

After the Supreme Court judgement, the whole industry has collapsed. Since 1996, the industry and the small and marginal farmers, as also the fishermen had requested the Government of India to constitute an Authority, namely, Coastal Regulatory Authority, as per the direction of the Supreme Court. This Authority will safeguard the industry and the fishermen community in our country.

With this industry, we will get three lakh direct employment; with the ancillary units, we can get employment for about seven lakh people in our country. Every year, we are earning, Rs.6,000 crore as foreign exchange through this industry. If we safeguard this industry, employment potential will also increase. We have to protect the livelihood of the fishermen community, particularly when there is the problem of salinity of water. Even now, fishermen are not getting safe drinking water in the coastal areas. With this industry, now there is a fear among the fishermen community that the ground water quality will further deteriorate and the salinity of water would increase, and then, the fishermen would suffer a lot in the coming days. So, that caution should be taken by this Ministry.

We will be creating this Authority with a sitting Judge or a former Judge. But according to me, the Chairman should be a technocrat. Normally, from the judiciary, they may not have enough knowledge about aquaculture; so, if there is a technocrat as the Chairman, he could take care of this industry, the environmental aspects and the problems faced by the fishermen.

Moreover, in this Bill, there is no provision to have a representative from the fishermen community. There is a provision for experts, for environmental people, and for others. But there is no provision for representing lakhs of fishermen. So, we have to provide for one such person, we have to take one person from the fishermen community, to safeguard their interests.

This Bill is a good Bill. Since the past eight years, we have been discussing about this; finally, the present Agriculture Minister, Shri Sharad Pawar has brought forward this Bill. I am appreciating him on behalf of my Party. He is giving a lot of boost to this industry. I am also appreciating him on behalf of the fishermen community and also on behalf of this industry.

...(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI TEJASWINI SEERAMESH (Kanakpura): Sir, I wait to tell, one thing. ...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. There is no need for that. Shri Vikrambhai Madam.

SHRI VIKRAMBHAI ARJANBHAI MADAM (Jamnagar): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to support the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill, 2005 brought forward by hon'ble Minister of Agriculture.

Chairman, Sir, I represent Jamnagar constituency of

Gujarat which is the largest coastal area in the country. People do not have any facility in the entire Saurashtra region. Fishermen of the region are the leading a miserable life as they do not have any facility. I suggest that they should be provided with living space and loans at low interest rate. It will help farmers to become self reliant. It will provide them employment and they will get sufficient amenities to live. I would request hon'ble Minister to provide maximum facilities to them and as my preceding speakers have also said, such provisions should be incorporated in the Act as may help provide maximum facilities to them.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am happy that several honourable Members have given their suggestions on this Bill which is very important Bill but appears to be very small.

[English]

In fact, I need not explain the entire background of this Bill because my colleague, the Minister of State has already given the details. It is true, as Shri K.S. Rao has described, the issue was pending for the last eight to ten years. I recollect when the Supreme Court took a decision, some of the authorities, especially in the State of Andhra Pradesh, took immediate action. I was in the Opposition at that time and I recollect there were many delegations from coastal areas, essentially, from Andhra Pradesh. A lot of youngsters had taken huge loans from the banks. They had decided to pursue their career in this particular area. But just because of one particular decision they had practically lost everything.

In those days, most of our colleagues from Andhra Pradesh, irrespective of the political party they belonged to, came together. They tried to convince the Government that some corrective action was needed. In that way, it was not very simple. Media, on the one hand, was taking a different approach. It was supporting the environmentalists. The judgement was also totally in favour of the environmentalists. On the other hand, thousands and thousands of youngsters, who had taken tremendous burden on their heads and had entered into this line as a profession, to develop their own career, practically lost everything. But the process to take corrective action had started.

A Bill was introduced in Rajya Sabha. Unfortunately, the Parliament was dissolved and as a result, it was not

[Shri Sharad Pawar]

possible to take corrective action. Next year, again the Bill was introduced and was referred to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee had given a number of suggestions. My predecessor, Shri Ajit Singh, gave opportunity to practically every interested person. As a result of this, the Government had got a number of suggestions and it was not possible for the Government to bring an amendment Bill. Ultimately, a decision was taken to introduce a fresh Bill. Though practically we have lost 10 years, I am happy that after wide consultation and discussion with all concerned, State representatives, fishermen and farming community, we could bring this Bill.

The Rajya Sabha has cleared it and today I am happy that we are discussing this Bill for the last few hours. This is one of the areas where there is a tremendous potential for a country like India. As my colleague, the Minister of State, has described, our last year's export was something Rs.6000 crore. I am observing that in the last three years, Vietnam has improved its exports substantially. It has touched practically Rs.10,000 crore for such a small country. Thailand's export is somewhere near Rs.20000 crore. We are utilising hardly 14 per cent of land which is not at all useful for any other purpose but we can use that land for this particular profession. After passing this Bill, and if the respective State Governments are ready to give tremendous facilities and encouragement to those youngsters who would like to enter in this line, I am sure, they – along with our friends from coastal areas – would try to create a situation where whatever India has lost in the last few years would be made up.

A number of points were raised by many hon. Members. Firstly, there was anxiety about how exactly we are going to protect the environment. In fact, this issue was raised by certain section to protect the environment and the judgement was also supporting this idea. In this regard, we have decided to follow the total Supreme Court guidelines. The Supreme Court has said that it is the responsibility of the State to protect environment. In clause 11(1) there is a provision which says if anything happens which would ultimately affect the environment, the Authority has got the right to take corrective action. For example, if any firm is causing damage, it is just possible even to close that particular firm which is affecting environment.

A point was raised here regarding clauses 15 and 22 and it was said that they would practically stop people going to any court. But that is not fully correct. Firstly, if you carefully study clauses 15 and 22, you will find that the Authority will definitely give a hearing before taking any decision. There is an opportunity for a person to plead his case before the Authority. To be frank, as per our

Constitution, the writ jurisdiction of the High Court and the Supreme Court is always there.

One of the hon. Members had raised the issue as to why opportunity should be given only to the judges to become the Chairman of this Authority. In fact, this is a quasi-judicial Authority and giving opportunity to a judge, who is not interested in taking sides, will definitely help in dispensing justice evenly from all angles.

An issue was raised about providing compensation. A mention of providing compensation has been made in clause 11(2) of the Bill. We would definitely think about a simple and effective system of appointing a person who can decide about compensation. But such a provision of providing for compensation is very much there in the Bill.

A point was made as to what would happen in the event of the Authority deciding on rejection of a registration. Clause 13(2) in the Bill deals with this particular subject. Refusal of registration can be done only after giving the party in question an opportunity of hearing.

Hon. Member Shri K.S. Rao suggested that substantial land is available for use in this type of business and that such a land should be given on lease to the poor people for coastal aquaculture. I think such a thing is possible through guidelines. We could definitely take care of this aspect when we issue the guidelines. We will accept this suggestion and try to implement it.

An issue was raised by many hon. Members here about the poor quality of seed and feed. In fact, we will ensure in the guidelines that the seeds will be provided by hatcheries only and that these hatcheries will provide disease-free seeds. An inspection machinery would also be put in place to keep an eye on the hatcheries.

I am fully aware of the events that took place in this industry in the last ten years. There are many cases and in some cases the problems had been of a very serious nature. It is not just a loss to the entrepreneur, but if such a message of loss is sent out to the outside world, then it would also affect our market abroad. From that angle we have to be very careful. Effective steps will definitely be taken in this regard.

A point was made that there are a number of cases where moneylenders are exploiting and cheating these entrepreneurs. I think, our total approach will be to give instructions to NABARD. We will also discuss with the Authority, NABARD and RBI and try to send instructions to the banks that they should reserve certain percentage of their resources to support this particular type of industry. I will discuss with NCDC and also try to introduce a scheme

where NCDC will also support this type of proposal, whether it is a co-operative proposal or a group proposal or a proposal coming from the self-help groups. I would like to assure the House that money will not be a problem. We would definitely take care to see that sufficient fund is provided.

Many hon. Members here have raised the issue about the composition of the Authority and practically most of the Members have raised the issue about representation from the fisherman and farming community.

In fact, under clause 4(3) (g), there is a provision that four members of coastal States can be included here. These four members from the coastal States will be essentially from fishermen community or farmers, especially those who are interested in this particular area and those who try to protect the interests of entrepreneurs.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU: It is better to incorporate it in the rules that out of the four members, two will be from fishermen community and two from farming community. Nobody will object to it.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: I accept this suggestion and we will take care of it at the time of drafting.

Hon. K.S. Rao has raised one important issue. It is true that recently, the American Government has taken a decision about anti-dumping duty. In fact, this particular issue was raised by the Minister for External Affairs who recently visited America, and after discussion with the American authorities on this particular subject, they agreed and gave an assurance to the Minister of State that they are ready to re-examine the entire issue and we are expecting the result of it.

Shri Pallam Raju has made a suggestion that we should try to encourage cold chain and other infrastructure. In fact, MPEDA will take corrective action in this area. In fact, we are not only thinking of it but some decisions are already taken. But it will take some time to come to action. So, there is tremendous potential in our country in areas like aquaculture and fishery sectors. Sizeable poor sections of the society are also associated with this particular profession. A sizeable section of women is also associated in this field. We would like to give more support and encouragement to them. That is why, we had decided to set up an organisation on the pattern of NDDB, the National Dairy Development Board which is one of the success stories in the country.

Once upon a time, this country was facing shortage of milk. I recall that when Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri was the

Prime Minister of the country, with his own idea, he had set up the National Dairy Development Board and substantial money was provided by the Government of India in those days. Dr. Kurien was appointed to look after this organisation. The organisation had introduced Operation Flood Scheme and today, India is the largest milk producer in the world. We are number one in the world and this is a great success story. So, if this is a success story in the field of milk, why not we follow exactly the same pattern for the development of fishery sector also? That is why, we have decided to set up Fishery Development Board and I am happy to say that the Planning Commission has, in principle, accepted our proposal and some limited provision is also suggested. We will be able to take a final decision in course of time. I would like to assure the House that ultimately, we will solve problems like requirement of development of infrastructure and others by this new organisation.

Shrimati Purandeswari has raised a different issue regarding the Chilka Lake which is not mentioned in this Bill. We will take care of it. We will take suitable action which will ultimately cover this particular problem. We will provide suitable action in our guidelines.

Many hon. Members have also suggested that we should give enough attention for research and development in this particular field.

In fact, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research is already working in this area. One or two institutions have been set up and they are doing an excellent job. I myself visited some of these institutions. They have developed new varieties. They are also using transgenic technique. With the help of transgenic technique, they are developing new breeds. I am confident that there will be perfect coordination between research organisations and the entrepreneurs.

SHRI M. M. PALLAM RAJU: Sir, may I intervene at this point?

Research is happening but dissemination of research information is not taking place properly. To add to this problem, what is happening is that they are trying to collate all the research organisations in one or two or three locations. But there is a move to consolidate all these things in one area in the hope of conserving the resources. But now they are spread all over. These organisations exist wherever there is aquaculture and pisciculture. So, I feel they should remain where they are so that effective dissemination takes place. This should be strengthened.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: I know what exactly you want to say. This particular problem is there. In fact, this particular

[Shri Sharad Pawar]

problem was studied by eminent experts and they came to certain conclusions. That is the reason why certain decisions have been taken. In this particular Bill, there is a proposal that the organisations or institutions which are doing research and are set up within 200 metres will not be disturbed. Along with this, I would like to assure the House that we will definitely take care of research. We will encourage research and we will provide sufficient money for this. Whatever research is done, it should not be restricted to laboratories and it should ultimately go to the field. Our efforts will be towards that end. That kind of precautions will be taken.

[Translation]

Several members, particularly the members from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, have given various suggestions regarding fresh water aquaculture. As Ramkripal Singh Yadav ji has said and it is also true also that there is no scarcity of water in adjoining areas of Ganga and Yamuna and this work can be undertaken in these areas also. I have said that we want to form an organisation on the pattern of NDDB. In our country, there are a large number of ponds, various irrigation projects and several places with abundance of water where we can undertake this type of work. Those areas are needed to be assisted and some arrangements are required to be made for it. Therefore, even today we have various schemes like fresh water aquaculture scheme, with us. In addition, several states have been provided with some assistance for these types of schemes. Particularly, Uttar Pradesh was provided with an assistance of nearly 10 crore rupees last year for the same purpose. ...*(Interruptions)* I do not have figures related with Bihar. There may be few problems. We will try to sort out those problems and if any attention has not been paid during the last two to three years, we will try to compensate that also.

There are several provisions regarding schemes of Central Government. It will be our endeavour to extend the benefits of Central Government's schemes particularly to the states of non-coastal areas by implementing different schemes for them. We will pay more attention to it. A proposal was mooted here while doing so, there is a need to help and pay more attention towards the families living below the poverty line. It is a fact that a large area of land is lying unutilised and that has hardly been utilised up to 14 percent. The right to distribute the remaining land lies with the State Governments. We will write to the State Governments to give priority to the families living below the poverty line, to the unemployed youth and to self help groups. An apprehension was expressed here that some multinationals may enter into this sector.

More than 90 percent of people have less than two hectares of land and there is no possibility of any MNC

entering into this sector. When we will write to State Governments for distribution of land, then we will caution them not to allow any MNC or other company in this sector. The business here will remain in the hands of youth, unemployed people, small farmers and Self-Help Groups. We will ask State Governments to take these steps. After observing the positive approach shown by all the honourable members of this House on this Bill, I am confident that my Ministry will pay full attention on the implementation of this Bill in toto. Some work was needed to be done earlier in this sector, but owing to a few reasons we have lagged behind during the last few years, and other countries overtook us. We will pay maximum attention to address this situation which has arisen. Along with foodgrain producing sector, this sector will also become a major export sector for the country. This sector will develop as an employment generating sector for the youth and we will always pay attention to it. With these words, I conclude.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill to provide for the establishment of a Coastal Aquaculture Authority for regulating the activities connected with coastal aquaculture in the coastal areas and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House will now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is:

"That clauses 2 to 27 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clauses 2 to 27 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title were added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister may now move that the Bill be passed.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

16.49 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

Electoral Reforms — Contd.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we will take up Item No. 13, discussion under Rule 193 — Electoral Reforms. It is expected from all the honourable members that they will be very brief in their submission and would throw light on main points and suggestions only.

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO (Parvatipuram): Mr. Chairman, I will just make a few points. Basically, I am not going in for a rambling political speech. Yesterday, when the House was adjourned, I was mentioning that we should have photo identity cards which will serve all purposes. I had said that should activate the electronic voting machine. This is basically to eliminate the prospects of booth capturing and to reduce the role of criminals during the electoral process.

Sir, certain Members have suggested, and from the general public also suggestions have been coming, that the people who have been chargesheeted for a crime which is punishable for more than 2 years should be disqualified from fighting elections. This is a double-edged sword. Now you already have Section 8 of the Representation of the People's Act which lays down conditions for disqualification.

Tomorrow, if you start making a statutory provision to say that anybody chargesheeted for a crime which can be punishable for more than two years is disqualified, this will be totally against all basic norms and principles of democracy. Well, all of us have gone through Shri N.N. Vohra's report. In today's situation and circumstances, a chargesheet can be filed against anybody. Just by filing a charge sheet if you are going to prevent a person from fighting elections and if he is acquitted after 5 or 10 years, who is going to compensate for the time in between? I totally oppose that kind of a suggestion.

Some colleagues spoke about the right to recall. The right to recall sounds like a very noble idea. But in our kind of polity and situation, tomorrow if you give the right to recall, the day you get elected to Parliament, from the next day, your opponents will start collecting signatures to recall you back from Parliament. Again, criminals will be used, money will play its role and it will become a continuing process. So, before making such provisions, we should deeply think about other consequences in our kind of a situation.

Some of the friends from the Left parties said that we should have a system of proportional representation. If half are going to be elected by the system of proportional representation, the existing constituencies will be enlarged, they will become twice in size. We have a geographical responsibility to more than one million voters. This kind of proportional representation system will not benefit our kind of a situation.

I have a different kind of suggestion. My hon. colleague who is sitting here had mentioned that in our First-Past-the-Post System, one party can get 51 per cent votes and one party which gets 49 per cent votes need not have a single member either in the Assembly or in Parliament. Theoretically that is possible. I would like to suggest that why do not we begin with the system of proportional representation for elections to the Upper House. After all, it is the Members of the Legislative Assemblies who elect Members to the Upper House. Based on the percentage of votes polled in an Assembly election, a formula can be devised and political parties can be allotted seats for Rajya Sabha. So, you see those who have got a lesser percentage of votes need not be denied completely from voicing the opinion in at least one House of the Parliament.

In recent times, there has been a lot of debate about the role of the Governor, whether a Governor should be there at all, whether he should not be there. How he should act and how he should not act. You are also aware of the fact that in the scheme of our Constitution, the Governor is probably the only Constitutional authority whom you cannot impeach. It is presumed that since the President appoints him, he can also recall him. Otherwise, it is vague and a Governor can also continue until his reliever comes. Suppose, tomorrow if I am the Governor of some State and you do not send a reliever for 10 years, I can continue for 15 years. Hon. Law Minister is here. I would like him to consider the possibilities after talking to people from other Opposition parties. Why should Governors not be elected by Members of both Houses of Parliament? If Members of both Houses of Parliament can elect the Vice-President who is Chairman of Council of States, why cannot Governors of States be elected by the single transferable vote just as Rajya Sabha Members are elected by MLAs for a fixed term of five years? This is my proposition and I would like you to consider this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO: Mr. Chairman, Sir, a large number of Members said and you yourself had said that if percentage of votes increases, if it is more than

[Shri V. Kishore Chandra S. Deo]

70 percent to 80 percent then those votes will not be counted. This is a constitutional abrogation. It is because every person has a right to vote as long as it is a genuine vote and by saying if it is more than 70 per cent to 80 per cent, if the last 10 per cent or 20 per cent voters do not vote, you are actually denying them the Constitutional right. I do not think that Election Commission or anybody has the right to take away your sacred and Constitutional right or guarantee to vote. I think this matter should be taken up seriously by the Government.

I will not take much of your time as you have asked me to conclude. I would like to thank you for this opportunity.

SHRI MADHUSUDAN MISTRY (Sabarkantha): Sir, please give me permission for a minute to make a suggestion. I would like to request that Law Minister should call a meeting of MPs to listen to these electoral reforms. This is a very important subject. Either he can call a Seminar in Annexe or anywhere else. That would really be very helpful. It is because a lot of people will not get an opportunity to speak here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, you can request him personally. There is no problem.

DR. M. JAGANNATH (Nagar Kumool): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to congratulate you for initiating this debate on electoral reforms under Rule 193. At the present juncture, this is very much needed. The framers of the Constitution would have never thought that we would be having such a situation in our country after 57 years of Independence.

Sir, the judiciary is interfering at every level and this is creating a very awkward situation for us. The Government is taking the plea that there should be political consensus for enforcing electoral reforms. But we have seen how many transformations have been taking place in this country in these 57 years after Independence. Many things have been decided by consensus. If the Government has the will, then they should immediately initiate the process of consultations with all political parties and create a consensus for bringing in electoral reforms. We have been discussing this subject in every Lok Sabha, but the Government is not taking any action.

Some time ago, a Writ Petition was filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties against the Government of India. On that, the Supreme Court has directed the Election Commission to elicit information regarding criminal records and assets of all the candidates. This type of a situation should not arise. This is happening due to the loopholes present in our laws.

As far as election expenditure is concerned, the Election Commission has put some restriction on election expenditure for every Parliamentary and Assembly constituency, but all the candidates are not strictly following that and so the results of the election, which have to reflect the wishes of the people, are getting influenced by various factors like money power etc. The money power is mainly used to influence the weaker sections of the people. Though money is not the only criteria for winning an election, our experience shows that whoever has got money power, he is influencing the result of an election by using his money power and this is going against those people who do not have sufficient money to spend in the election. That is why, the Telugu Desam Party has been proposing for a long time that the Government should fund the election process and there should also be a strict vigilance on that.

Sir, some initiatives had been taken some time ago. The people thought that some electoral reforms are going to come and something good was going to happen. But those initiatives have been put in cold storage and the same old practices are continuing. We have seen during the election time on television as to how some people who have been carrying huge moneybags to influence the voters have been caught. When they were caught, they said that it was not their money. Then, whose money was it? So, I would request the Government to introduce State funding of election and the Government should have a strict vigilance on spending. The Telugu Desam Party proposed to have this system in the local body elections, but it could not be implemented due to certain reasons.

Now, I come to criminalisation of politics. There is a nexus between politicians and criminals in our country and so we are having an awkward situation. In some cases, the courts are taking the upper hand and this is really creating a very bad situation in the country. India is the largest democracy in the world and to have this kind of situation is not good for our country. Once some individuals with criminal records get elected, they become the law makers, and when they become law makers, who will implement the laws? Will the law enforcing agencies properly implement the law against those persons who make laws?

Sir, there are enough laws in our country, but there are many loopholes in them. So, I would request the Law Minister that we should have a very stringent law, and this is very important.

17.00 hrs.

Some time back, we have participated in the All Party Meeting regarding electoral reforms. But we could not reach a consensus because it is a fact that in all political

parties, we have some sort of individuals with criminal records. This is a serious matter. We should sit together, think over it and a law should be made that no political party, whichever it maybe, should have candidates with criminal records.

One of my friends was just saying that there are people with criminal record of two years. It is a funny thing because it is not proved so far whether that person is a criminal. The case takes years together, but till such time we have a person with criminal record. What will be the situation? Who will be the law enforcing authority? How can they enforce law in such a case if the people sitting here have criminal records? That is why, my request to the hon. Law Minister is to see that a remedial law is made so that none of the political parties sponsors people with criminals records.

Sir, of late, as we are passing through a phase where the lower level employees — the top level employees do not bother about elections — have actually become the deciding factor in the elections at the grass root level. Though there are laws that bar the employees who indulge in political activities and there is a provision for punishment, none of them has been punished so far. Generally, it is a complaint during elections.

Sir, in the recent elections EVMs were used. We have brought in a radical change in the voting system. It is a good sign. It quickens the process and we get quick results. But what has happened? We have not informed the people at large about the operation of these EVMs, that is why it played havoc throughout the country. I do not want to name anybody. But in such a condition where the employees violate the electoral rules and indulge in such activities, they should be punished severely.

Then, Sir, seeking votes on the basis of religion and communalism has become a part and parcel of electioneering now adays. Though the authorities know what is happening, they are keeping a lukewarm attitude and allowing people to seek votes on the basis of caste, religion and community. Such open statements are made during the time of elections. These should be curbed and there should be free and fair elections. Otherwise, it will be a dangerous trend for the country as a whole.

Coming to muscle power and booth-capturing, in some of the States, we have seen that people use muscle power and capture booths in the elections. They have their own private armies. They threaten the employees posted at the election booths and get their candidates elected. There are instances, in some villages there are people,

who have not voted at all even now after 57 years of Independence. They have not seen the ballot box, how it looks like. We have to take steps with regard to large scale rigging and countermanding the elections at those places. But if a law is made that wherever there is such type of booth capturing, the election will be countermanded automatically, then there will be a fear in the minds of candidates that if this happens the election will be countermanded. This will keep the people away from using muscle power.

Finally, I request the Government of India not to go with the plea that a consensus has to be brought in. When will the consensus be brought in? Unless the Government makes a concrete effort, pursues continuously, a consensus cannot be brought in. What happened to the Women Reservation Bill? Let us not take the plea that consensus could not be reached. This will pave the way for the criminals to get into, the muscle power to get into, the money power to get into politics and fair elections will not be held.

Sir, India has earned a reputation for having free and fair elections. Let this reputation not be damaged. Finally, I would request the hon. Law Minister to call for an all party meeting, have a consensus and come out with such a law wherein good people are elected and good governance is given to this country.

[Translation]

KUNWAR MANVENDRA SINGH (Mathura): Mr. Chairman, Sir, first of all, I am grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to speak in this august House on the issue of electoral reforms being discussed under rule 193. Hon. Minister of Law and Justice is present here. I would like to draw his attention towards some points. All people, who have attained 18 years of age have constitutional right to vote in this country. This right is available to every citizen of India who elect their representatives for State and Centre or Gram Sabha to District councils. Because of mistakes of some officer or because of political malice this fundamental right of many people is being taken away and their names do not figure in voter list. When people go to cast their vote, they do not find their names there. The Election Commission has issued photo identity card to all the voters. But during the previous election, it was found that the persons having identity cards, which was attested by the local election authority, did not find their names in the voter list. I would like to know from hon. Minister whether any action has been taken against the officers who are responsible for depriving the people from exercising their constitutional and fundamental rights? They simply say that

[Kunwar Manvendra Singh]

your name is not in the voter list. In the previous election we found that the names of some people were struck out from the voter list with red pencil. When they turned up to cast their votes they were told that their names did not figure in the voter list so they could not cast their votes. I would like to know as to who conferred this right on those officers, who were responsible for conducting elections. I would like to know whether the Government has taken any action against those officers or not? Apart from this, whether political parties have also been asked to explain why these people were deprived of their constitutional rights by discriminating against them in this way?

Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to inform the hon. Minister that during election time polling booths are set up separated by a long distance. It is to be seen whether there is any conspiracy in it or not because the old people, women and ailing persons have to travel two-three kilometres to cast their votes. The previous election was held in summer and as a result several voters could not go to far away booths to cast their votes.

I, through this House, would like to suggest Hon. Minister that the distance between two polling booths should not be more than 500 yards. If such an arrangement is made then old and ailing persons will also be able to cast their votes easily. Therefore, polling station should be at a convenient place.

Many things have been said here about criminalisation of politics so I do not want to say much about that. But I would like to say about exit polls. Before elections exist polls are prepared in air-conditioned rooms and telecast on Doordarshan that so and so party/coalition is going to form the Government. Before the previous general election these exit polls predicted that next Government would be formed by the BJP. But today BJP is sitting in opposition. I would request that the process of exit polls should begin only after the polling process is completed.

The behaviour of the security personnels, deployed at booths with voters is not good. They terrorize the voters. The security personnels are seen threatening the voters as a result they get perplexed at the time of casting their votes and sometimes they do not even go inside to cast their votes. I request that the security personnel deployed there should work with patience and take action only in case any untoward incident takes place. Their behaviour should be polite with voters.

With these words I conclude.

SHRI SITA RAM SINGH (Sheohar): Mr. Chairman, Sir,

I would like to thank my colleagues for bringing this motion regarding electoral reforms under rule 193 before the House. Sir, Election Commission is a constitutional body in this country and under the constitution every citizen above the age of 18 years has a right to vote but I would like to know from hon. Ministers that under which provision of constitution, Election Commission has the right to prevent the voters from casting their votes on the pretext of not having photo identity cards. When Hon. Minister will reply to the debate he must explain why the Election Commission issued photo identity cards only to 62-68-70 percent voters and why the remaining 30 percent legitimate electorates were barred from casting their votes by the order of Election Commission? I would like to know what type of law is this?

Secondly, the Government decided to issue identity cards with a view to check malpractices and bogus voting. But who is responsible for issuing identity cards? It is duty of Election Commission. What is the fault on the part of electorate that he was not issued identity card by the Commission. 14th law was formulated and the electorate were denied the right to vote by the officer present there as they did not have photo identity cards. Under which law it was done?

Thirdly, all are talking about corruption and corruption in election is also a talking point. Yesterday some hon. Members were asking how the misuse of money in elections could be stopped? There is only one way and for this the Government should declare that the amount spent by political parties on its candidates will be borne by the Government itself. It will automatically rootout the corruption. It is my suggestion and hon. Minister should tell in his reply as to what he thinks about it.

Sir, fourthly, I would like to speak about code of conduct. Code of Conduct is meant for the electorate, candidates and political parties. I would like to know from hon. Minister whether there is any code of conduct for the election officers or not? Hon. Member is saying that rules are there. I have little knowledge about it. If such code of conduct is there, should it not be followed by the election officers? Rules must be complied with and if they do not comply, some action should be taken against them. I would like to know whether there is any instance when action has been taken against the election officers who violate the rules or show any favouratism during elections?

Sir, I want to make one more point clear that the office holders appointed to enforce the laws passed by this Parliament in accordance with the principles of the Constitution and democracy, and many representatives of the people wrongly interpret all the rules and legislations

and enforce them on the public. They use these legislations against the people and bypass them when their own turn comes.

Sir, the number of voting booths are proportionate to the number of voters but the time allowed for casting votes has not been changed. Voting machines have been provided for casting votes and the process takes a minimum of three minutes. The hon. Member is saying that it takes two minutes, it is not true, it takes three minutes. The vote won't be counted till the machine gives a beep. Among the officials deputed at the voting booth there are some who can't see without spectacles and there are others who have been given training yet are unable to explain the process to the voters. On account of that our votes are not being counted. It is my suggestion that we should revert to the earlier voting process.

Sir, police force is deployed to stop booth capturing. Is it supposed to stop the voters from voting at the booths? The police force deputed in Bihar intimidated the voters, supported communal forces and made various allegations. It is a matter of shame and the public would have heaved a sigh of relief had action been taken against such officers and officials. Paramilitary forces were deployed and communalism raised its head, voters from poor sections were hindered from casting their votes. Candidates were questioned as to why they were fighting on the ticket of some political party instead of standing as independents. Voters were told to vote against a particular party. There incidents have happened in Bihar. Today, he who loses, speaks the loudest. We are the largest party, we were defeated by unfair means in the Assembly elections. We would have formed government in Bihar on our own. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude now.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SITA RAM SINGH: Sir, this is my last point. Delimitation in Bihar. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SHAILENDRA KUMAR: Sir, this relates to Bihar. Please listen to this, it is very important. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SITA RAM SINGH: Sir, voters from one side of the Ganga River Bank are voting on the other side of the river.

District has been deemed as one unit but a parliamentary seat has not been taken to be a unit. Panchayats have been split. There is no geographical unity, no unity of thought. Some areas lying away from each other by 10

kms. have been integrated for the purpose of delimitation. The proposal for delimitation is flawed.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to point out to the Hon. Minister, through you, that what is the use of giving membership to political parties if they don't have any voting rights and if the Election Commission has the final say in all the matters. Where is the need for political parties if they are not to be consulted and if they don't have any voting rights. What is the rationale behind it? I request the Minister to clarify the points raised by me in his reply to the discussion.

(English)

DR. K. S. MANOJ (Alleppey): Thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity. I also thank you for initiating the discussion on electoral reforms. I think, this must be discussed with the utmost importance but I am very sad that while discussing this very important issue, our Opposition friends are not here in Parliament.

Any discussion on electoral reforms should be directed to reinforce and strengthen the people's right to vote without fear or favour, for which, I think, the compulsory voting system should not be accepted.

As many hon. Members have pointed out, the turnout of voters in elections has been declining. The percentage of voting, year after year, is found to be diminishing. The reason for this is because of the loss of faith in election norms and also the fact the political parties as well as candidates are not fulfilling the electoral promises and manifestoes put before the people.

Also, there has been communalisation, criminalisation, and corruption as well as corporatisation of elections. Just as there is communalisation and corruption, nowadays, corporatisation of elections is also taking place because election expenses are increasing day by day. So, the ordinary man is not able to contest elections. In order to avoid this, the proposal put forward by many hon. Members that there should be State funding of elections could be accepted. For this, a corpus fund should be formed and from that corpus fund the candidates should be funded.

There is also the problem faced by non-resident Indians and migrants from different States. In New Delhi, there are around eight lakh to ten lakh Keralites but none of them has got the voting right. Even after residing here for ten to fifteen years, they are deprived of their voting rights. So, the non-resident Indians as well as migrants from one State to another should be given voting rights.

[Shri K.S. Mano]

One more issue is that an incumbent Minister or a sitting MP could contest elections but a government servant, if he is in the Central or State Government service, is not allowed to contest elections.

So, a Government servant should be allowed to contest the election after taking leave or so. If he wins the election, he may resign from that post.

Another thing is regarding the delimitation. Now, the delimitation is based on the population. In our area, most of the educated community and forward community have adopted the family planning norms. But there are other societies which have not adopted the family planning norms. Those communities, which have adopted the family planning norms, are penalised nowadays. The limits of the constituencies are based on the population. So, where there is more population, there is loss of seats in certain areas. So, this should also be considered.

So, with these few words, I conclude.

SHRI S.K. KHARVENTHAN (Palani): Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to discuss about electoral reforms from Gram Panchayat to Parliament level.

The first point that I want to elucidate is about the reserved constituencies. For the past 50 years, there has been no change by way of rotation in respect of a reserved constituency. The maximum period is ten years; otherwise in the reserved constituencies, 70 per cent of the population is affected. They are not able to elect their candidates. In the other remaining constituencies, the people who come under reservation are not able to elect their candidates from their community. So, it must be restricted up to ten years only.

Then, Independent candidates are to be totally avoided. Security deposit is to be raised.

Another important point is with respect to the withdrawal of the nomination. Polling days must be reduced to only one week. It will avoid unnecessary expenditure.

Now, I come to booth identification slips. While they are giving booth identification slips, they are also giving money from Rs. 100 to Rs. 500. So, the booth identification slips must be given by the Government itself at least ten days before to avoid corruption and to fight the money power and muscle power.

We are also appointing security guards and retired persons in the polling booths who are more than 70 years of age. How will they prevent any untoward incident? So, youngsters must be appointed in their place.

Again, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) must be compulsorily used.

Lastly, I am strongly opposing the view that charge-sheeted persons should not participate in the elections. I, being the Criminal Lawyer, know that an FIR can be filed by influencing police. He can file a chargesheet under Section 324 or 325 IPC for two-year punishment. I would like to know whether he could be prevented. So, after the judgement, only convicted persons should be debarred from contesting any election. I strongly oppose debarring the charge-sheeted persons to contest the election. These are some of my views.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): Mr. Chairman, Sir, you started your speech in Hindi therefore I would like to thank you in Hindi. He raised this issue of public welfare in the House and focussed the attention of the country on the importance of electoral reforms for strengthening of democracy. His subtle speech was well received. I will try to reply to each of the points touched upon therein. Many hon. Members have raised important questions in the House. I will try to cover all those points in my reply. If, even after that any point remains to be answered, I will also organise a symposium of all MPs desirous of sharing their views on electoral reforms.

[English]

Sir, India is a very vibrant democracy. I will give you how over the years, India has travelled this path, and we have strengthened the democracy from step to step. When the first election took place in India after the Constitution came into force, 173 million voters participated.

In 1957, 193.7 million voters participated. So, their number increased by 20 millions. In 1962, 216.4 million voters participated. So, about 22 million voters increased. In 1967, 249 million voters participated. There was an increase of another about 33 million. In 1972, 274.1 million voters participated. In 1977, 321.1 million voters participated. In 1980, 355 million voters participated. In 1984, 399.8 million voters participated.

Then comes the crucial period. Let us see how there was a big jump in the voters' participation. In 1988, the voting age was reduced from 21 years to 18 years. I remember that my dynamic leader late Rajiv Gandhi took personal interest that we should allow younger generation to participate more in the voting process. So, the voting age was reduced when I was the Law Minister. In 1989 elections, there was a quantum jump in the participation of

voters from 399.8 million to 478.9 million. So, this was a major electoral reform allowing our younger generation to participate in voting and decide the fate of the country. Thereafter, the increase continued. In 1991, 514.1 million voters participated. In 1996, 591.5 million voters participated. In the last elections held in 2004, 671.5 million voters participated. So, we have strengthened the democracy in each election held after the first one. ...*(Interruptions)* Whatever may be the reason, whether population increase or anything else, but the voters have participated in large numbers. In the last elections, 67 crore voters participated in the Indian democracy. That is the success of democracy and we should not be pessimistic that our democracy is not vibrant.

There are few areas where we feel difficulties arise in allowing poor people, under-privileged people to cast their votes because of the money and muscle power. These obstacles have to be removed by us by a resolute mind and firm law. So, we are determined to see that the weaker sections, the minorities, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are allowed to participate in the election process because without their participation, democracy will not be complete. This is my commitment and we are going to do everything to strengthen this process. So, we should not be worried about our democracy.

After all, with all these problems, we are all here. All of you have been elected. You have worked hard for your elections. There have been obstacles which you have pointed out during the debate. All of you have faced some problems, but a determined political party and a determined candidate has to overcome these problems so that he plays a role in the Indian democracy. I personally feel that our democracy is getting strengthened every day with more and more participation of our people, more and more down-trodden people coming to vote and more and more Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people understanding their rights. They are now able to speak. Their voice is coming to Parliament. The minorities' voice is coming to Parliament. We should be proud of it.

Now, I will take you to some points which have been made. The first major issue which has been pointed out is of state funding. I really appreciate that the money plays a very vital role in elections these days and there is a little danger that if you allow money power to have more bearing on elections, democracy may have a setback because India is a poor country having more number of workers and peasants. So, we should not allow role of money power into it. Therefore, there was a demand of State funding.

All the hon. Members are aware that a lot of Committees were appointed, but the Committee which

discussed this subject was the late Shri Indrajit Gupta Committee. It had made certain recommendations, which were pending. I am very happy to announce that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government in the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) has committed itself to consider steps for introducing State funding in elections. This is in our CMP, and all of you are aware that this Government is committed to it. In this connection, the recommendations of the Indrajit Gupta Committee, which deals with items like rent-free accommodation, rent-free telephone with STD facility for political parties, petrol, diesel, printing press, paper, postal stamps, loud speakers, telephones, etc. have to be given to the candidates of the recognised political parties. This is a commitment that I am re-iterating on the floor of the House, and we will definitely speed-up the State funding after having consensus on it. If it can be improved, then we would like to improve it. But, at least, this is the commitment of our Government.

The second very important announcement, which I want to make on the floor of the House, is that the NCMP of this Government is committed to introduce the legislation for 1/3rd reservation for women in Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha. Accordingly, the Constitution Amendment Bill — on the lines, which has lapsed for providing reservation of 1/3rd seats in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies — is under consideration of this Government. These are the two major announcements, which I would like to make here because these are very very important and revolutionary changes to be made in the system of election.

Sir, another very important point, which you have been pleased to touch, and several hon. Members from Bihar have touched is this. There are two vital issues before us. I am very sorry that my friends on the Opposition are not here. I would have loved if they were present here. We would have discussed certain matters, which vitally concern the functioning of democracy because we cannot take democracy for a ride by making wrong type of statements to the innocent masses of this country.

What do you mean by a tainted Minister or a tainted Member of Parliament? Let us all understand the law with regard to this issue. We are a society not governed by whims and caprices. We are a society, which is governed by the rule of law. Every citizen; every person; every State; and every forum has to be governed by the rule of law. What is the law on this issue? All the hon. Members are aware about it, but I would briefly touch this point having regard to the shortage of time at my disposal. There are a few Sections, namely, Section 8, Section 8 (a), Section 9, Section 9 (a), Section 10, Section 10 (a) and Section 11, which deal with disqualification of persons from being

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chosen or disqualification after being chosen as Members of Parliament. Today, the law of the land is that anybody who is elected as a Member of Parliament is entitled to be a Minister, and, if a person is not a Member of Parliament, then within six months he will have to be elected as a Member of Parliament. Otherwise, the person will cease to be a Minister. This is the law of the land. Is there any person who doubts this law?

Now, Section 8 states that if a person is convicted for spreading communal disharmony or for spreading untouchability, and if he is convicted for any amount of sentence, then he is disqualified. Therefore, it deals with disqualification after conviction. Section 8 (a) deals with disqualification on grounds of corrupt practices; Section 9 deals with dismissal for corruption and disloyalty to the Government; Section 9 (a) deals with disqualification for having Government contracts; Section 10 deals with having employment in a Government company or Public Undertaking; Section 10 (a) deals with failure to lodge election expenses; and Section 11 states that the powers are vested in the Election Commission for reviewing the disqualification. This is the whole gamut of disqualification etc.

I do not know from where the Opposition says, every day, that so and so is a tainted Minister or so and so is a tainted Member of Parliament. I am very sorry to say that they have no regard for their colleagues. Once we are elected as Members of Parliament, we should have regard for each other to some extent. Once we are elected as Members of Parliament, we are not Members of Parliament for one political party, but we are Members of Parliament for the whole country. This is the spirit with which we should perform our duties, and this is the spirit with which we should participate in the debates. If you ignore all this, then it is violation of the rule of law. It means that you have no commitment for democracy; no commitment for rule of law; no commitment for the people of India; and it would be the saddest day if this kind of a picture continues in this House. This will be retrogression of democracy in the country.

Whoever has participated in this debate, I have noted down the names of all those hon. Members. We had several Members who spoke. They are : Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal, Shri Ramji Lal Suman, Shri P. Karunakaran, Shri Raghunath Jha, Shri Ilyas Azmi from BSP, who made very good points and I have noted them, Shri Sandeep Dikshit — the young man spoke brilliantly and I have a lot of hope on him — Shri Suravaram Sudhakar Reddy, Ch. Lal Singh — I am not very happy with the way he spoke. However, since he comes from Jammu and Kashmir, his voice is bound to be very vociferous. Shri Varkala Radhakrishnan,

Prof. Ramadas, Shri Arun Kumar, Shri Raja Ram Pal, Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, Shri Tufani Saroj, Shri Asaduddin Owaisi — the young Member from the MIM, whose father was my friend. I am very happy that he has come to Parliament also spoke. Dr. Sujan Chakraborty, Shri Lal Mani Prasad, Shri V. Kishore Chandra S. Deo — my dear friend has written a book on electoral reforms — also spoke. Before I came here, I read his book. He always speaks eloquently and his points have been noted. Dr. M. Jagannath, Kunwar Manvendra Singh, Shri Sita Ram Singh, Dr. K.S. Manoj, my friend, Advocate Kharventhan from Chennai, and a few other friends also spoke. If I missed someone, they may point out and I will be happy to acknowledge his or her contribution to the debate.

Sir, there are a few points which have been listed in your own speech. I will give more emphasis to it because you have made such a brilliant speech which I have not heard for many, many days in the recent years. You were right that we are governed by a Constitution, whether it is the Election Commission, a candidate, or a political party. Nobody can use his whims in the matter of decision-making. Nobody should have any whims; and everything should be covered by law.

I say with all the emphasis at my disposal that, sometimes, the Election Commission goes out of the crease, and that is where the problem arise. For example, recently, notices were given to political parties saying that, 'if you do not, do this, we are going to cancel your symbol.' How can it be done? A political party has been allotted a symbol because it is a recognised national political party or a State party. The party has a right, and what has the model code of conduct to do with the reservation of a symbol? These matters are decided under Para 15 of the Symbol Reservation Rules, whereas the model code of conduct has still no statutory backing because the model code of conduct is only an ideal that political parties shall not do this or do that. In the shape of model code of conduct, their election process has become very humiliating. No Minister is allowed to go anywhere. The Ministers are turned out of bounds; and MPs are turned out of bounds. It is certainly a bad picture of democracy, and we will not appreciate this. I promise to you that I will bring a legislation on this.

I would not like any of the functionaries in the participation of democracy to use caprice, to use *mala fide*, or for that matter, whims in these matters. They are to be defined precisely by which a neat and clean election process is maintained. I promise this to you.

Coming to election observers, they are not super-bosses; they are there to see that proper election takes place. I concede that it is only the Election Commission which has the constitutional mandate to hold fair and free elections. There is no other agency in our country. Our founding fathers have given this power to the Election Commission. We should all cooperate and respond to the needs of all so that fair and free elections take place. If there is no free and fair election, the losers are the voters, who are our masters. We cannot say that they should be deprived of their legitimate right.

I may also hasten to clarify here that many people say that they are not allowed to vote because they do not have the identity cards. As the law stands today, I can refer to the section, a man who has his name in the voters' list, is entitled to cast vote, a statutory right to vote. All these aberrations. ...*(Interruptions)* There is no question of denying him the right. He has a statutory right. He can insist and cast his vote. All these Election Commissioners have been reducing this exercise of franchise by various methods.

AN HON. MEMBER: They are not allowing.

SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ: What are the political parties here for? We should come and discuss and see that the poor people are not threatened, they are not subjected to all kinds of unnecessary and unfair checks. That is our duty. But that requires a very serious consideration by political parties.

We accepted the Identity Cards. What is an Identity Card for? Let me tell you, I have been as a worker in the polling booth. I know about this ailment. What is an Identity Card for? The question is, when a voter goes into the polling booth, the opposite polling agent can question the identity of a voter. In that case you have to deposit Rs.2— in my time it was Rs.2 — and challenge them. After it is objected to, then the question of identity comes. Otherwise, in a village everybody knows who is who. Unless the polling agent says that he has a doubt about the identity of a person, there is no question of not allowing anybody to vote. Once a voter goes and says that he is so and so and that his father's name is so and so, he has to be allowed to vote unless there is a question of his identity. I am very sorry to say that we have been, one after the other, following the wrong course of identity.

The robust common sense of the voter in this country seeks. I have stated in my earlier statement, successful democracy. People exercise effortlessly their right to vote, if we do not interfere with their right. In the Panchayats,

the local people have organised elections in a smooth manner. I have never seen this in elections, except in the last one decade. In earlier elections, in my youth, I have seen such fantastic way of participation. People used to go singing songs of freedom and cast their votes just like going on a picnic. Now, it is tension all around. Why has this tension come? We should share some part of it ourselves also.

There are complaints of booth-capturing. I am very sorry to say this, there are complaints. Some of the hon. Members do complain whenever discussions take place. We should all stop this. This is total negation of democracy. If a political party or any candidate resorts to booth-capturing, she or he is not entitled to be a Member of Parliament because you are playing a fraud on your own voters. You should see that maximum voters go and cast their votes. A free and frank exercise of franchise alone will make you a Member of Parliament. That is the type of democracy that is envisaged. So, all political parties should sit together and see.

This is a recent ailment. If you are a popular MP, you need not resort to booth-capturing. If your political party has a following, you should not resort to booth-capturing. But, it is a fact of life. We do recognise it. I have the statistics with me because I changed the law in 1989 when countermanding of election on account of booth-capturing was introduced as a special section in the Representation of the People Act. This is a fact of life.

There are other ailments like use of communalism. There is rampant use of communalism in our electoral process. We raise the issue of temple, we raise the issue of mosque, we raise the issue of gurudwara. In the name of religion, in the name of Ram, in the name of Rahim, all these things are happening. This is a solid, corrupt practice. Section 123 does not permit it. Therefore, all political parties should decide that you win on merits. Why do you resort to temple-building? What has the temple-building got to do with elections? This is where we have divided the society dangerously. So dangerously that we do not see eye to eye with each other in many matters. Dividing the society either on macro level or micro; level is very dangerous for the unity and integrity of this country. What kind of governance we will have if our society is divided? Governance means unifying the pluralistic society we have got, a fantastic unity in diversity which the world over you cannot see. This is where we should concentrate. This booth-capturing must be stopped. After all we are responsible for giving power to the Election Commission that it can countermand, it can adjourn, it can prepone or postpone elections and do all types of things.

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We have heard about this kind of phenomena. These are not in all parts of the country. In some parts of this country, there is absolutely no such complaint. We should give credit to those people. Wherever this exists, of course, you want this. I receive so many requests to deploy BSF and to deploy CRPF. Otherwise, local police should be adequate.

I am telling you with my long experience of dealing with electoral laws that there are complaints against the police. Yesterday, one hon. Member pointed out that the local Daroga asked to cast vote for a particular candidate. This is the fact of life. We cannot deny it. We are taking the help of the political parties and candidates. I am very sorry to say that this type of election is not a success of democracy where you ask the presiding officer that you do 'tick, tick, tick' or you ask the police officer to threaten people. This is hardly any part of democracy. If your own people like you, show affection for you and when they go for voting, you deny them voting at a particular point with the help of police and with the help of presiding officer. You tell the police and the presiding officer that they should not be allowed to vote and in their place, you or the police office or the polling-officer exercise their franchise. This is our job. We should not allow it. We should not divide also.

Yesterday, Prof. Ram Gopal Yadav, my very dear friend, had a genuine complaint. Wherever there is a particular community, you say that, do not deploy the presiding officer from that community, do not deploy the Observer from that community. This is where we have landed this country. We are responsible for casteism, communalism, favouritism and nepotism. We are the Members of Parliament. We deal with the fate of the people. So, we should make a resolution but I would like that when the whole House is in Session, when the whole House is participating, only then, can you have a proper and decisive debate on this issue. A fragmented Parliament will have no effect. I am saying this with great humility at my command that Parliament should be united.

There was a question recently that Judiciary is overtaking Parliament and Parliament is suffering. Legislative prerogatives of Parliament are going down. There is not doubt about it. If Parliament is not one, a divided House cannot deal with its own prerogatives. Parliament has to be one. United decision of Parliament will keep our prerogatives, our privileges and our freedom in tact. Otherwise, any institution would like to usurp the sphere of the other. This is the natural process. If there is a vacant space, water will go there. We have to keep the demarcated powers between the Judiciary, the Legislature

and the Executive in proper places. Montesquieu's theory of separation of power must be respected and obeyed. Our forefathers have no such conflict except one case of Uttar Pradesh where the Speaker and the Chief Justice had a confrontation. But that was resolved even by this House. This is such a powerful House. But slowly and steadily this House has lost several of its prerogatives after Kesavanand Bharati's case. Let us resolve that we should not allow Parliament's power to be abrogated or usurped by any other institution. We are all one on this.

I would humbly say - I am a Minister - I cannot criticise the Election Commission. Hon. Members have made several very valid points that we should not allow super bosses over us. We should have public servants doing their duty rightly. We should also see that undue threat and intimidation of voters should not be there. I have noted all your points.

What happened in Bihar? Shri Lalu Prasad's political party, the RJD, had several complaints. So also other parties. They had horrible experience that as to how the officers work with a biased mind. The result would obviously be detrimental to elections. At this moment, I have noted your points. Booths should be nearer to the population, must be closer to the population so that infirm, aged citizens cast their votes without any trouble. Then, wherever the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, weaker sections and minorities live, I think, we should have mobile booths. I remember in one elections, we sent mobile vans to the Schedule Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in some parts of UP for casting votes in their mohallas or streets. That is the proposal we will discuss with the Election Commission. My own view is that the polling booths should not have more than a 1,000 voters. The distance between polling booths should be less than 1,000 meters so that within the time allotted for voting, they can vote.

If it is 500 to 1000 voters, we will discuss and the time also can be increased after discussion. I am again reminding you that these are matters of importance for which we will develop political consensus.

Now, I come to the proposals which have been received from the Election Commission. The Election Commission has emphasised that too many affidavits are being revived and they should be consolidated in Form 26. This is a reasonable suggestion and we are applying our mind to it.

About avoiding frivolous candidates, the Election Commission has suggested that we should increase the security deposit to Rs.20,000 for candidates to Parliament and Rs.10,000 for candidates to Assemblies and fifty per

cent reduction in the amount of security deposit for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates.

Then comes criminalisation of politics. I am very sorry to say that I cannot accept the proposition, however fanciful it may be, that we disqualify a person against whom a charge-sheet has been filed or who has been charge-sheeted by a court of law. I have been for forty years at the Bar. I know, how easily it is to pick up an opponent, get a charge-sheet filed and see that the Court frames the charge in the next hearing. The basic concept is, there is a presumption of innocence all over the world. Even in the European Human Rights Court, they have said that an accused is entitled to be presumed innocent unless he is proved to the contrary. My friends will bear me out that this presumption of innocence was sought to be diluted in Britain. And the European Court came heavily on the British law that you cannot dilute the presumption of innocence; otherwise there will be no chance of defending, there will be no fair trial.

I firmly rejected the proposals that a charge-sheeted person should be disqualified. But I am saying with humility that we should discuss these issues. I remember, the Leader of the Opposition sat in a meeting. We were in the Opposition then and they were in the Government. The Law Minister was also there and we discussed this issue threshold whether we should disqualify a person. This is a serious matter. We would like to say that we want to improve the image of our Members of Parliament and Ministers. But they are very popular figures. A person who has 25 or 30 Members of Parliament elected from one State, one cannot ignore his merit. They say that we should disqualify them because they do not like them. There is so much of opposition. It is not a fair treatment to our colleagues. I want that this House should debate this. This must go on record. Our Prime Minister is very much concerned about probity in public life. And probity in public life is such a thing on which there can be no two opinions. This must be discussed. But with whom should we discuss? They say that we should do this otherwise they would not participate. Is this the way to function in a democracy? We should invite our friends. If they want to contribute on probity in public life, I have my brief ready. My Prime Minister has given invitation. We can discuss everything so that our democratic institutions are strengthened. But they do not want it to be strengthened, rather it is being deflated. If you puncture a tyre of a vehicle, how can it move? We cannot paralyse the House for any reason. This is our House. It is not a charity of political parties. They should come here, they should criticise us, the Government. We would like the criticism; we would like their participation. We would try to answer the questions. If

we cannot, we will improve ourselves. They are not doing that way.

Therefore, I am not very happy with this debate. We are all one side of the party. I would again like to have this debate. I would like that the issue of criminalisation must be discussed and accepted by all major political parties. Otherwise, there will be always an arrow of injustice that they were not heard their arguments were ignored. Therefore, after almost 55 years of democracy, the full circle is coming. More and more under-privileged people will come to Parliament; more and more backward class people will come to Parliament. We should accept this as success of democracy rather than say that they are not proper persons and disqualify them.

18.00 hrs.

You may not like them. But that is a part of democracy which Mahatma Gandhi, Nehruji and Dr. Ambedkar gave us.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The proceedings of the House are extended till this item is concluded.

[English]

SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ: I am trying to speak as fast as I can at this stage. I am saying that we should allow every political party, which is registered, full participation and sharing. The more minority community, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe people come, the more happy they will feel. Otherwise what happened in our country when under *Brahminical* order, people were not given rights, Buddhism came to this country, Jainism and the Sikhism also came. So, our society will not tolerate injustice. It will revolt. We do not want to give any cause to any community, to any caste or ethnic group. Our smallest microscopic minority, that is Parasi community, is working so much for the country. What an outstanding contribution they have made! We should respect all of them. Therefore, we should do this. We should allow full functioning of democracy. Political parties have a duty because if they accept black money and spend that money, whom are you criticising? You should not accept it.

The Election Commission has recommended that there should be an audit of political parties. Then there is also a proposal to restrict contest on one seat alone. That also is under consideration. Many hon. Members have spoken about exit polls and opinion polls. In my view, there should be a complete ban on them till the polling is over. It is because it favours the rich. He can buy the television and print media and say them: You put that; you say that

[Shri H. R. Bhardwa]

we are winning. The poor people get misguided. So, that is also under consideration.

Then comes the issue of surrogate advertisements in the media. They should also be controlled. We are studying them. There is also a proposal of negative voting. This is under consideration. We will be governed by the views of the House whether to introduce negative voting or have positive voting. My view is that positive voting alone should be there. India is so vast a country. We have 67 crore participating in elections. We should allow them to do positive work. I personally feel this. Then there is a proposal to appoint an appellate authority. I think that this is a good suggestion. We can consider it. The issue of compulsory maintenance of accounts by political parties and their audit was also raised. On this, political parties can decide.

Then on the sharing of TV and cable network, we are for sharing. Rules and regulations can be framed for it. We will go by that decision. As regards composition of Election Commission and the Constitutional protection, at present, there is only one person who is protected under the Constitution, that is, CEC. A proposal is pending. Earlier Government did not favour that proposal and it is pending before us.

Regarding expenses of the Election Commission to be treated as 'charged', I think, the money is given to the Election Commission whenever it is asked for. There is no problem in this.

Then comes the point of transfer of electoral officers. This is the point which is the real cause of trouble. People are picked up who know nothing of the area. They go as bosses, occupy guest houses and play upon this. We should have respect for both sides – for Observers or election officers as well as for the Members of Parliament. They are the men of experience following the people. So, both should serve. The presiding officers and others should be totally neutral. If they are outside observers, they should be such that they do not interfere with this. We are trying to strengthen this aspect as much as possible. We are giving our attention to them.

There are couple of other matters on anti-defection law, on which various Members have spoken. When I first moved a Bill in 1985, I proposed that there should be a complete ban on defection. For whatever reason, the view gained ground that in democracy, ideological splits do take place in political parties.

So, we kept it as one-third. But how it was used – you all know it very well. Earlier there was a consensus

that it should be done away with. It was done away with. Now, defection is a serious malady. It leaves nothing in a Member of Parliament. 'Aya ram, gaya ram' are bad names. Elected representatives should avoid it; people's representatives should avoid being called by 'Aya ram, gaya ram'. It is for us to decide what type of more provisions to be included to insulate defections. I do not think anybody should enjoy power by defections. This is a serious infraction on democracy. We should put an end to it.

You should stick to your political party. You swear in the name of your political party; you swear in the name of your leader; you take money from your political party and then, for your own selfish gain, one fine morning, you say 'good bye'. That is not the way life should be. On Anti-Defection Law, we would like to firm up further.

Then there is the point about common voters' list. Our next proposal is this. All these identity cards and others will be useless, once we have the voters' list with the picture on it. We are arranging to have the picture of every voter in the rolls of the voters' list. So, there will be no question of asking for identity cards and others. These will be very easy with the application of information technology. Such a voters' list does exist in some parts of the world. So, this kind of a voters' list will be good.

Then, there is a point about updating the voters' list. You cannot blame the Election Commission for this. It is your duty to check up your names in the list before election. Every political party, in my days, used to check up the list before the elections. We knew how many voters have 'migrated, how many voters are not residing in a particular locality, etc. We had a separate list for that; the political parties are not doing their job. They are relying on Election Commission now. Election Commission has two methods of updating - one is a general enumeration that takes place where teachers are deployed; and the other is the general revision that takes place every year in the month of January. This is the type of arrangement that we do. But there is always a possibility for deletion. If there are certain deletions, you should be vigilant. I see that sometimes the names of minorities, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are deleted. They know their voting pattern and their mindset. So, they are trying to delete their names. But it is your statutory right under law that you protect your name in the list, and that you cast your vote. On this, we cannot impose compulsions.

The right to vote is a statutory vote. Everybody has a right and everybody must exercise the franchise. That is a privilege which you get in every General Election or Bye-Election. You should educate the society on this. Making

of law on this will not be of much use. I have shown the voting pattern right from Independence. The voting pattern has been in the ranges of 61 per cent, 51 per cent, 61 per cent, 67 per cent, etc., and in any case, not more than 70 per cent. I am not for countermanding elections when there is more percentage of voting in a particular area. You may be such a popular leader that, everybody would like to vote for you. So, the Election Commission cannot countermand it only on grounds of excessive voting. We will see how we can remedy this type of a malady. These are the few areas of worry.

Fortunately, in the recent election that took place in 2004, we had such a situation; we will definitely like to sit with the Opposition and with all other political parties; we will try to eliminate Independents. They are making the ballot paper unusually unwieldy. Earlier we said that their proportion should be increased. That was done. Then the order of their names in the ballot paper was decided that first the names of the political parties and then theirs.

Besides this, we will also think, if anything else could be done. But please remember that in the eyes of law, everybody is entitled to contest elections. He may not come through the political parties. We know it very well that Independents are being elected still and in large numbers. When somebody is not given a ticket, he tends to fight the elections independently. Nowadays, Independents decide the Governments. Every political party says that we must muster the support of the Independents.

So, we will have to study the law on this — how we can restrict their entry. This is a wider question. Sir, you have touched the core. Now, this House should continue with this and political parties will be given invitation by the Government to present their views and we will be too happy to do that. This Government, as I said, is committed to this. Neat, clean and the highest standards of probity in public life are likely to be established, if we are all sincere.

I thank all the hon. Members and thank you, Sir, particularly, for having accommodated me today. If there is any clarification, I would be too happy to reply to that.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Members are aware that generally speaking, there is no convention of putting questions after the hon. Minister has concluded his reply. Even so, this being a matter of national importance I am allowing those hon. Members who have raised their hands and are eager for some clarifications, to speak. However, this should not be made a precedent.

SHRI RAMJI LAL SUMAN (Firozabad): Sir, the hon. Minister has given a clear reply and I thank him for it. A meaningful discussion on electoral reforms has been carried out in the duration of two days and he has pleaded the case of his side well as an advocate of standing. I am aware of his constraints and appreciate why he has avoided criticising the Election Commission. He has taken the right stand. Even so, the matters that have come to light of late have placed a question mark on the credibility of an institution like the Election Commission. As he has pointed out that during the previous Lok Sabha and Assembly Elections. However, during the previous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections voters were turned back from the voting centres though they had their names in the voting list. They were not allowed to cast their votes and so were unable to exercise their franchise. This is a very serious matter. It is my assertion that the voting percentage would have been much higher had these people been allowed to cast their votes. They were not allowed to vote because they did not have voters photo identity cards even though other people confirmed/verified their identity. I would like to say to you that a legislation will have to be passed to ensure that people are not deprived of their voting rights. I would also like to request you that since Assembly Elections are going to be held shortly in some the states therefore there is an urgent need to hold a discussion with all political parties on this issue so that some good suggestions in this regard may come through.

[English]

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN (Kasargod): Within the permitted time the hon. Minister has answered most of the questions. I think we need to have some more discussion on this issue. As some of the States are going in for elections next year, the delimitation aspect is covered only in a few State. May I know from the hon. Law Minister whether the law permits or whether the Government thinks that the next elections that are going to be held can be held with the existing constituencies or the delimited constituencies?

[Translation]

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV (Patna): Mr. Chairman, it is unfortunate that interruptions take place whenever I stand up to speak. The Minister in his reply has accepted that many of the things said by the hon. Members are true, particularly the things pointed out by Shri Devendra Prasad Yadav. This is a very important point that there is no provision in law regarding the voting percentage — whether the percentage ought to be 63 percent, 65 percent or 67 percent. He has also not shed any light on this. He has

[Shri Ram Kripal Yadav]

accepted that some officers tend to act arbitrarily. What action do they propose to take against such officers, has also not been discussed. Minister, Sir, the officers, particularly in Bihar, who have transgressed their limits and made a mockery of rules and the constitution by imposing their own laws over and above the laws of the land, what action is being contemplated against them? Mr. Devendra Prasad Yadav, in the Chair right now, had proposed setting up of an All Party Committee to bring about improvements in the deficiencies and flaws inherent in the Electoral Code of Conduct so as to reach a decision in this regard. He has mentioned this in his reply. A committee should be actually set up so that our discussion bears some fruit and a solution for this problem is found so that such officers may be reined in to enable free and fair elections.

DR. RAJESH MISHRA (Varanasi): The Minister of Law has almost all the points that have been raised. However, there is one point of which the House has been seized for the last several days. It is that nowadays voting percentage is declining which seems to show that people are becoming indifferent towards democracy. Perhaps he missed this point or he will reply to it later. Our Fundamental Duties have been identified in the constitution. Can the duty to vote also not be included in the Fundamental Duties? If it is marked out as a Fundamental Duty people will feel more inclined towards the process of democracy and the voting percentage will also increase. People will also become aware of their duty. For example, we have been elected to the House by the people. Now it is our duty, whether we belong to the party in power or to the opposition, to fulfil our duty and be present in the House. The presence of those members who boycott the House can also be ensured by making it a Fundamental Duty.

SHRI VIKRAMBHAI ARJANBHAI MADAM (Jamnagar): I want to give suggestions about implementation of the code of conduct. I had contested elections in 1998. At the time, many banners were put up in my constituency. Someone put up a banner in a government place. A case was registered against me on that account and I have been running from pillar to post for seven years now but the case has not been settled yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister has got your point.

SHRI ILYAS AZMI (Shahabad): Past 15 years' exercise has proved that we have not been able to provide everyone with photo identity cards. After spending crores of rupees only about 60 percent of people have been issued with these identity cards. Therefore, this system ought to be dispensed with. The earlier system should be restored whereby if anyone was suspected of impersonation a

challenge vote was registered on payment of Rs. Two as fee amount.

[English]

SHRI PRABODH PANDA (Midnapore): I am thankful to the Minister as he has covered almost all the points but I would like to raise one point. He has already committed in this House itself that he is considering the issue of reservation for the women in the Assemblies and Parliament. May I know from the Minister whether he is contemplating to bring this amendment to the Constitution in the coming Monsoon Session?

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now the Law Minister will reply.

SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ: Shri Ramji Lal Suman has raised a very important question. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: No other hon. Member will be allowed to speak now.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Apart from the hon. Minister's statement, no other statement is to be recorded.

...*(Interruptions)**

[English]

SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ: I am not yielding now. ...*(Interruptions)* If they are not interested, I will not oblige them.

[Translation]

It is for the first time in this House that discussion has been restarted after the Minister has given his reply. They may be told that this is not done. The hon. Member has made a very important point.

Some hon. Members have raised some important points. Hon. Ramji Lal Suman has raised question about the role of the Election Commission. It has a constitutional obligation. It is responsible for making the voters' list. It constitutes its paraphernalia in the States and it has a constitutional obligation towards preparation of voters list and conducting free and fair elections. Even the courts have said that they will not interfere once the election process has started. Therefore, all the hon. Members should understand that election process and all work

* Not recorded

related to elections come under the purview of the Election Commission. It is for the first time that I am hearing of such a thing which has been discussed here. I also had some differences with Mr. T.N. Seshan personally. We had taken certain actions that we later made justiciable by formulating Conditions of Services of Election Commission. Election Commission cannot be doubted. Whether you like it or not, it is a constitutional body and it is our duty to strengthen it and make it independent. If there is any flaw, let us be made aware of that and we shall bring legislation to remove those flaws. Thereafter, we will call you for a debate on the matter. Subsequently, maintaining full respect towards the Election Commission we will request them to co-operate with the political parties and to communicate with them if the political parties are expected to show due respect towards it. We will also ask the Commission to listen to your point of view. This has been the political tradition of this country as also the tradition of having mutual trust. Pressurising the Minister, the Election Commission — is not a part of our tradition. The previous government had tried to stop exit polls. The Attorney General had given his opinion that this is valid under the right of Freedom of Expression. Even then, the Election Commission has given a suggestion that exit polls may be stopped by bringing about a statutory provision. I assure you that any action in this regard shall be taken after consulting with you and shall also be intimated to you. The work of delimitation is being carried out by the Delimitation Commission. I cannot make any statement about it in the Parliament since it is a separate body. Delimitations are taking place in each of the states in collaboration with the Election Commission and information about completion of this work can be sought only from them. You may ask the Delimitation Commission the names of the places where delimitations will take place for the 2006 elections. All efforts are on to pass a legislation. I am myself very keen to see that a high percentage of votes should be cast. It would be a matter of pride if 70-80 percent voting is achieved. But if one wants 100 percent voting through booth-capturing then it will not be allowed to happen. I said in my first speech that it is not enough to have a target of 70 percent votes. I will look into it that maximum votes are protected. My fellow members' statement that the desire to vote has declined amongst the people is not true. I can quote the percentage of voter turnout from the first election onwards. There was 61 percent vote turnout in the first elections, 62 percent in the second, then it fell to 56 percent, thereafter it increased to 61 percent and in the fifth election it was 55 percent. Votes decrease by two to four percent if the weather is hot, they increase if the weather is pleasant. It was 50 percent in

the sixth election, 56 percent in the seventh election, 63 percent in the eighth elections, 61 percent in the ninth elections. Voter turn out remained between 56 to 57 percent, it rose to 62 percent and now it is 58 percent. This is the voting pattern and there are many reasons behind it. Those who say that they can ensure 100 percent are mistaken because the trend and the data do not show this. Maybe you can achieve it for yourself but the scenario for the whole country is as above and it is not a matter for concern. When people become more aware voter turnout shall increase.

I am against giving punishment to those people who do not cast vote. I also oppose the point of view that people should be penalised for abstaining from voting when we are unable to offer any positive incentive to them. This is against democratic traditions.

Apart from the above, complaints have been made against the election staff. You are aware that any officer, any employee of the government may be penalised. After the election the whole of the staff goes on deputation. Whether it is the state government or as in the case of your government, or as when it was Shri Lalu Yadav's government at that time his DM and the police officers had rebelled against him. You should realise that the bureaucracy is neutral, it changes its allegiance according to the changed situation. You strengthen your side, carry out your work with sincerity and create trust for yourself in the people's mind. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV: Sir, if the officers of Election Commission don't do justice. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ: There is no authority over and above the authority of the officers of the Election Commission. ...*(Interruptions)* I have nothing to say beyond this. ...*(Interruptions)*

(English)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned to meet again at 11 a.m. on 6th May, 2005.

...*(Interruptions)*

18.27 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, May 6, 2005/Vaisakha 16, 1927 (Saka).

ANNEXURE-I

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