

such a situation, it is not possible for persons hailing from rural areas or belonging to SC & ST to go in for training. Will the hon. Minister therefore, make some arrangements for the training of these persons, so that they get training and also their quota is filled?

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: As I have informed, scholarships to 40 trainees are given and facility for free training for 3 trainees is also there. However, I am sorry to say that despite these incentives, adequate number of persons are not coming forward.

[English]

Haj Pilgrims

287. SHRI R. ANBARASU: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of Haj

Details of total round trip fare charged for the carriage of each pilgrim and the airlines which operated charter flights during the last three years are given below:-

2992: Operation by Air India/Indian Airlines by own aircraft.

Fare: Rs. 25,300 per pilgrim from Bombay/Delhi.

Rs. 27,474 per pilgrim from Madras

Rs. 26,770 per pilgrim from Calcutta

2993: Operation by wetleased air craft from Arplot.

Fare: Rs.28,000 per pilgrim - same fare from all four points.

2994: Operation by wetleased air craft from M/s European Air lines.

Fare: Rs. 17,000 per pilgrim - same fare from all four points.

Pilgrims go by air from India every year;

(b) if so, the arrangements made in this regard and the fares charged during each of the last three years;

(c) the amount spent on each flight and the particulars of the airlines which operated the flights; and

(d) the summary of the complaints/suggestions received in this regard and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a). Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Air India makes arrangements for travel in consultation with the Central Haj Committee.

Amount spent on each flight is difficult to quantify since Haj charter rates are determined for the complete operations.

(d). Compliants received related to inadequate on board services, inadequate capacity to lift baggage, particularly on the return leg, communication problems, inadequate water supply on board etc. Steps have been taken to remove these difficulties. By and large, there has been general satisfaction about the services provided for Haj charter operations in 2994.

SHRI R. ANBARASU: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I appreciate the hon. Minister for giving an elaborate reply for the question. At the same time, I am not satisfied with the answer given to part (c) of my question.

There were a lot of complaints from the passengers regarding inadequate water supply on board and inadequate capacity to lift baggages particularly on the return leg. So, I want to know from the hon. Minister what steps have been taken to rectify these lapses.

Further, I learn that during the last three years, the total number of people going for piilgimage is slowly decreasing. What is the reason for that?

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Sir, I share the concern of the hon. Member with regard to pilgrims going to Haj as far as shortage of water is concerned. I also agree with him about the problems regarding their baggage. But these problems are difficult for any airlines to cope with. It is hundred per cent load of Hajjis. As you are aware, even while in the aircraft, the Hajjis perform Namaz. It is not necessary that one has to bow in the aircraft. Even while sitting, you can perform Namaz. Before performing the Namaz even while on Haj, one has to go

to toiled and wash his hands, face, etc. In a normal flight, everybody does not use this facility.

In this case, hundred per cent Hajjis are using this facility. Everybody just goes for Namaz. As it is, it can carry a particular amount of water. That is a permanent thing which, I think, nobody can change.

While going from this place to Haj, there is no problem as far as baggage is concerned. I do not say that there is something wrong on the part of the Hajjis coming from Haj. They stay there for 2-2/2 months. During that stay, a Haji or a group of Hajjis are bound to buy a lot of things maybe for their personal use. While coming back, they want to carry all those things. It is very difficult to carry all the things which they might deem fit in their interest to bring. If we bring all the things which they would like to bring, then there is a load penalty. We have to leave the passengers there. It is an inherent difficulty.

On our part, we are trying our level best. Last year, some baggage was left there. We had to carry that baggage by another aircraft.

It is not true that the number of Hajjis is coming down. Rather the number of Hajjis is going up every year. They are keeping pace with the population of the country. The number of Hajjis is more than 26,000 in 2992. Out of them, 4.5 per cent go by ship. In 2992, 29,495 went by air. In 2993, 20693 went by air. And in 2994, 20933 went by air. So, the number is increasing every year.

SHRI R. ANBARASU: I would like to know from the hon. Minister specifically what facilities are being provided by Air India to Haj pilgrims.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: As far as the facilities are concerned, Air India is providing two or three facilities. Normally, each passenger is carrying 20-30 kgs of luggage. But we are allowing them to carry a little more than that - 35 kgs. Apart from 35 kgs of baggage, the holy water, 'Zam Zam', is also being allowed to be carried free to the tune of 20 kgs.

Apart from these things, one sling bag and one umbrella are provided to each Haji by Air India. Also, while Air India charges for the in-flight service, it does not charge any money for the food supplied as a take away before disembarkation at Jeddah.

SHRI B. AKBER PASHA: Mr. Speaker Sir, I would like to know what made the Ministry of Civil Aviation to wet lease the aircraft for the Haj pilgrims, instead of providing the services by Air India?

MR. SPEAKER: That is because the required number of aircraft are not available.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Till the year 1992, Air India and Indian Airlines were undertaking this exercise. Then we realised that we had to dislocate a number of Air India and Indian Airlines scheduled flights. So, Government of India has taken this decision of wet leasing and I am happy to say that both the passengers and the two airlines, viz Air India, and Indian Airlines are happy with this arrangement. In 1992, more than 220 flights had to be dislocated. With this wet lease arrangement, we could solve the problem of dislocation of scheduled flights.

SHRI E. AHAMED: As a matter of fact, whatever possible is being done by the Government for the Haj pilgrims. But all these complaints started only after the

introduction of wet lease aircraft from Aeroflot and other companies. Air India and Indian Airlines were using Boeing 747 and A-300 Airbuses which have sufficient space and other facilities. But the aircraft now being wet leased for Haj pilgrims do not have enough space and the other required facilities are also less on than what are provided in the aircraft operated by Air India and Indian Airlines. This could be the reason for these complaints. But these problems can very well be solved in one way. Air India and Indian Airlines may arrange for some more staff at Jeddah during this time to look after the Haj pilgrims. All the other international airlines are providing additional staff exclusively to look after the Haj pilgrims, whereas we are getting along with whatever existing staff that we have. That is what I am given to understand. It appears that the staff provided by Air India and Indian Airlines is not sufficient to look after the interests of the Hajjis. After all, Hajjis have been going on pilgrimage all these years.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ahamed, this is Question Hour. Please be brief and put the question.

SHRI E. AHAMED: My point is that this is not the time that these Haj pilgrims are performing *Namaz* etc. in the plane. It is only because of the wet leased aircraft, all these inconveniences are caused.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: As submitted already, the change of aircraft was necessary. I have cited just one example of 1992 when Air India had to cancel 55 flights and reschedule more than 220 flights. We cannot afford to continue in this way for years together. So, we have to take this decision so that we do not have to cause a lot of inconvenience to the passengers and loss to Air India and Indian Airlines.

The hon. Minister has mentioned about additional staff for Haj pilgrims. We are providing extra staff at Jeddah from Bombay and Delhi to take care of the Hajis and if required, we can provide some more staff in future. There is no problem.

SHRI INDER JIT: Sir, last year, Parliament's Standing Committee on External Affairs had, in its Report, objected to heavy subsidy on Haj travel from here by air for the Hajis and had recommended that this subsidy must be progressively reduced and ultimately eliminated. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the subsidy on air travel for the Hajis has been progressively reduced and, if so, to what extent it has been eliminated.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: I am not aware of the recommendation of the Committee. Even without their recommendation, we took a decision at our level with the progressively reduce it. The hon. Member will be very happy that this year, we have reduced the subsidy by Rs. 2,000 per Haji and in the coming years, it will further be reduced.

SHRI E. AHAMED: That was done under protest.

SHRI INDER JIT: Sir, this request was made in a formal report submitted to the House last year. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I think the Government will take into account both the sides.

[*Translation*]

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Nationalised Banks

283 SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH:

DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to direct nationalised banks to compete with the private and foreign banking institutions on the same terms and conditions;

(b) if so, its impact on the customers;

(c) whether the Government have received any memorandum from leading bankers and trade unions in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V.CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY): (a) to (d) The public sector banks like private sector banks and foreign banks operating in the country are required to comply with the statutory requirements contained in the Banking Regulation Act, 2949, Reserve Bank of India Act, 2934 and other relevant statutes. The directions issued by Reserve Bank of India from time to time, unless otherwise stated, are equally applicable to all banks.

Government and the Reserve Bank of India have however impressed upon the public sector banks the urgent need to improve their productivity, efficiency and profitab part of the efforts being made in this regard, substantial funds have been made available to the nationalised banks for the purpose of recapitalisation. Performance agreements, emphasising inter alia improvements in productivity and mechanisation in selected areas, have been entered into by the Reserve Bank of