

Rs. 23.654 crores was allocated for this purpose. During the Eighth Five Year Plan 1481 additional departmental branch post offices and 372 departmental post offices have been opened till now. Out of these 90 additional departmental post-offices and 12 departmental sub-post offices have been opened in Orissa alone.

The hon. Member has rightly said that this department is facing financial problem and funds allocated by the Planning Commission, was further, curtailed by the Ministry of Finance. This plan period is now going to an end. We will try to consider your suggestions seriously in the next financial year.

[English]

SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, from the figures that the hon. Minister has given relating to the State of Orissa, it can be seen that there is no progress in increasing the number of post offices. Similar is the case with other states, particularly, the State of Maharashtra.

On the one hand the Government is taking up communication in a big way and on the other hand no progress is made.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The question relates to Orissa.

SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL : Sir, I am talking about Orissa only. So, I would like to know if the Government has stopped all planning to open post offices in every village with 1000 population. If so, what is the modus operandi for establishing such Post Offices?

[Translation]

SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA : Sir, the largest network of post offices in the world is in India. Although China has more population than India. As per information given to me there are only 52,000 post offices whereas in our country there are about 1,53,000 post offices. However modernisation is yet to be done and the required services are to be provided. Therefore some improvement is needed. Hon. Member has asked about the norms. These norms include population of 3000, distance of three kilometer and loss not more than 33.5 per cent. In remote areas further reduction of 550 in the population can be made.

KUMARI SELJA : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, though this question relates to Orissa, but I also want to ask a general question for opening additional post offices in my constituency. I have also tried many times but every time the department showed its helplessness. Just now while replying the question of Shrimati Sushma Swaraj the Minister has told that there is shortage of funds. We know it and would like to help them. I am sure that the whole House will agree to my point that when so many schemes are run through post offices, there are so many schemes for women and funds are allocated for those schemes. I request the Government to pay attention to it and consider this issue in priority area so

that more post offices can be opened. We have seen that even after fulfilment of the required criteria these post offices are not being opened. I, therefore, urge that hon. Minister should take firm initiative in this direction and we are ready to give him our support. My question is that whether more and more post offices will be opened?

SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA : We will certainly do that. We are here to make efforts.

[English]

Top Priority to Air Safety

203. SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV.
DR T.SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have given top priority to air safety.

(b) if so, the steps taken being taken by the Government in this regard.

(c) the allocation made for this purpose during 1995-96, 1996-97, and

(d) the results achieved so far?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the table of the Sabha

STATEMENT

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Air Marshal J.K. Seth (Retd) to review the existing set up of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Aircraft Act, 1934, Aircraft Rules, 1937 and various Safety Regulations to ensure air safety. In addition, steps such as safety audit of operators, implementation of recommendations emanating from investigation of aircraft accidents etc. are continuously taken to enhance the level of air safety.

(c) During the financial year 1995-96, Rs.1.61 crores were spent under Plan Schemes by Directorate General of Civil Aviation to enhance the level of air safety and during the current financial year i.e. 1996-97, a total of Rs. 2.90 crores have been allocated for the purpose.

(d) There has been an improvement in aviation safety. The number of aircraft accidents have progressively decreased during the last 4 years.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in recent times, there was an accident which occurred near Delhi costing more than 351 lives. Such accidents had occurred in the past also. In the last two or three

years, about eight accidents had occurred in the Indian Airlines and other airlines.

After the Bangalore air crash, the then Chairman of the Indian Airlines, Shri Pratap had resigned. Shri Scindia also had resigned after another air crash. After what had happened near Delhi, I do not want the Minister to resign. It was not his fault. But I would like to draw his attention to the fact that when our air space was opened to the private sector and to the international sector, here, in this House, many Members of Parliament had objected, not on the policy but they raised a question whether our navigation system in the various Airports was up-to-date to meet the demands of the air navigation and to make them safe. That was the basic question. The then Minister, Shri Arif Mohammad Khan, I remember, in this Parliament had raised the question of purchase of Arbus 320 and he himself has said that our civil aviation system was not up-to-date. Now, we are surprised to see that an organisation of international fame, that is the International Air Transport Association, the apex body of the world civil aviation industry, has delivered a major blow to the Indian Airlines in regard to safety by rating it as a high risk airline...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please put your question.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: The IATA Committee had a closed door meeting at Singapore on the 16th and 17th April, analysed the accidents between 1985 and 1994 and ultimately came to the decision of having a distinctly higher accident rate than the world average rate...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please put your question.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: He is not used to asking questions...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: Our friends from CPM, while supporting the Government, are over enthusiastic to support the Ministers also. He may also be a cause of an accident one day. He should not forget that.

My question is very specific. I do not want to blame the Minister. I do not want to blame the Indian Airlines or Air India. My question is whether the Minister himself is satisfied about the air safety measures or not. He is a good Minister. He goes deep into it. I do not know how much time he gets. He is going all over the country interpreting speeches.

Mr. Minister, whatever time you have got in the Ministry, are you yourself satisfied about the safety measures and if not, what steps are you going to take in regard to the propaganda which is being made by the world bodies? You are now growing and you are competing in the world market. I was in America the other day. All the telecast people were projecting Indian Airlines as a high risk airline. This not good...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please conclude.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: Sir, there may be an accident between you and me.

I want to know what steps the Minister is taking to bring up-to-date the safety measures in the civil aviation system; what is the present position; and whether the airports in all the Metropolitan cities, where international flights land and take off, have a good navigation system...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, an apprehension has been raised by the Hon. Member. I think, just two days back while making a statement in this august House, I have said that when I took charge of this Ministry, immediately after seeing this, I appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Air Marshal J.K. Seth. I have appointed this Committee two months back. This Committee will go into the whole aspect and will give a complete report on our air safety and on whether our airports are well-equipped according to international standards or not.

As on today, I am very much confident and satisfied with whatever arrangements we are having; they are according to international standards. Sir, for your information, in the year 1993, the number of accidents was 13 in India. In 1994, it came down to nine. In 1995, it was six and in 1996 it has come down to five. When compared to the other international arena, Indian skies are less accident-prone. This aspect has not only been accepted by me but by the international community. When I saw the news, whatever statement that has appeared in the IATA, immediately I asked my Civil Aviation Secretary to contact them. For your information, the IATA has denied it and to that effect they have faxed a letter stating that they have not raised such questions as far as Indian Airlines is concerned.

Sir, I would like to submit for your information that the premium of insurance which Indian Airlines is giving has come down because our accident rate is less and our safety measures are good.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: Sir, it is a pity, whether it is the Railway Minister or the Minister of Civil Aviation that they try to show their efficiency by bringing down the rate of accidents. It is not the case of rate of accidents coming down. It is not desirable to have any accident. I am going to Calcutta today. I may be a victim of that less percentage. So do not say like that. I am trying to point out certain things.

The other thing is, The Hindustan Times editorial of 14th November, 1996 - but it is going all over the world- says

"The International Federation of Airline Pilots' Association publishes periodically a black list of the world airports. It awards a black star to those airports which its members consider to be critically deficient by international standards. Other airports considered unsafe, but less dangerously so, are classified with red, and then, orange stars. The Delhi airport has been

black-starred for long for its notoriously bad navigational aids and its imperfect instrument landing system has been the cause for several air accidents in the past."

This is the perception of the various international associations. Mr. Minister, as I say, I am not telling against anybody because it is the system which is going on. What I am trying to impress is that it is high time that you formed that Committee. According to that Committee's recommendation, you must see that all our airports-whether small or big - are equipped with better civil navigation system so that recurrence of these accidents does not happen. Can you give us a time-bound programme as to when you are expecting your Report and by what time you are going to take corrective steps? Please let me know which are the aircraft in North-East which are in a safe condition so that I can buy my ticket accordingly.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Sir, for his information, I am also travelling in the same flight in which he is travelling!

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not as if separate arrangement has been made for me. As for the Committee constituted recently, the aim behind its constitution was to find out the soundness of the existing system and the department I am heading at present and through which I get information because foreign papers report something else and my department presents an entirely different picture regarding the same issue. That is why I decided to form a Committee and gave instructions that it should submit its report regarding the air safety, as to whether it is according to the international standard or not and if it is according to the international standard, how can it be improved further and if not, what are the shortcomings?

Secondly, regarding the foreign sources and the report that appeared in a newspaper and which was being referred to by the hon'ble member, I would like to say that because of competition, our goods are always declared useless vis-a-vis the foreign goods. If their goods are brought here, they are considered okay but the ones already available with us are dismissed as useless. What they want is that if foreign technology is brought in our country, this particular facility would be available. In this way, a deliberate effort is being made to find fault with our technology. The foreigners have always been making such attempts. Even now they are trying to lead us to believe that our technology and information system is useless and not upto the mark.

After the Air Safety Report is submitted by the Air Chief Marshall Seth, it would prove to the whole world that all the equipments available with the Civil Aviation Department are upto date and of international standard.

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY : By when the report is expected to be presented.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : He has given an undertaking to submit report regarding Delhi incident by March, 1997 and regarding Mumbai incident by June, 1997.

[English]

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this question is very important. It involves all our lives. Let us not be in a hurry. Let us ask the questions very carefully as it is in the interest of everybody.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : But you should not take more than two minutes to frame a question.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, I will do it in one minute and forty-five seconds.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Your present accident has nothing to do with the air safety, we hope.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : It was a car accident.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please come to the point.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : I am very happy. I want to say one thing. We have got a very dynamic Minister who has got a phenomenal self confidence.

[Translation]

His reply and style of functioning reflects his self confidence.

[English]

He is having very active portfolios of Ministries of Information and Broadcasting and Civil Aviation besides touring all over India with the hon. Prime Minister.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please come to the question.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : We are very happy that he is doing good work in the Ministry of Civil Aviation. We are also very happy that he is safeguarding our interests... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please let him speak.

(Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : I am talking on everyone's behalf... (Interruptions)

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : He is also in the film line!... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Dr. Reddy, please be brief.

(Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Recently on 27th of November, in my constituency, Visakhapatnam, we had a miraculous escape from a possible disaster when an aircraft carrying 119 passengers including hon. Member, Shri Ayyanna Patrudu, who is sitting here, who was travelling from Visakhapatnam to Hyderabad, was about to crash in ten minutes of take off, but God had saved us and we all were safe... (Interruptions) Therefore, even

though the number of accidents has come down, it does not mean that we must have accidents. Human life is very valuable. We must remember that the existing old radars in our country require replacement with modern sophisticated radars of international standards.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : You have only half-a-minute more.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : I must tell you one point. Before asking the question, I must tell about it ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please ask the question.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : The Hindustan Times in a report says and I quote :

"A study by the Washington based consultant concluded that Indian Airlines industry was hampered by pilot skills and air traffic instructions below even minimum standards.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please come to the question.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, according to experts, the congested New Delhi Airport like many in Africa, China and the CIS countries, is sorely lacking in modern navigational aids and traffic management systems that could have prevented the recent disaster.

Now, I must bring to the notice of the hon. Minister the most important point.

I came to know that ATC automation system is very important. In 1988, it was felt that we must introduce this system which at that time was costing Rs 200 crore. But unfortunately, at that time it was not implemented and now, I believe, the price has gone upto Rs 423 crore. So, the Minister should bear in mind that if the automatic system is introduced...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Mr. Reddy, what is the question? Please ask the question.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : I am asking the question, Sir. I would like to know whether the Minister is going to fight with the Finance Ministry to provide Rs 423 crore and introduce this automatic system which will enhance their prestige and also safeguard our lives. Also, the Minister must assure us that in future, like in Visakhapatnam when we had a miraculous escape, accidents do not take place. I would like to know what precautions he is going to take in this regard.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Sir, as far as the automatic system is concerned, in Mumbai and Delhi, we are already introducing the new technology. I would like to inform the House that within three years, I want to see that the secondary radar system should be there in the entire country, right from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and we will do it. Today when I was having a discussion with my officials, I directed them that instead of buying new planes, let us first have the secondary radar system in

the country with that secondary radar system. Within three years we are going to instal that.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, the Minister has not replied about the Visakhapatnam accident. He must tell about the Vishakhapatnam accident.

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : All right, you have made your point.

[English]

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, he must give the reply about the Visakhapatnam accident, in which Shri Ayyanna Patrudu, who is sitting here, had a miraculous escape.

AN HON. MEMBER : How did it have a miraculous escape?

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Because he was not there!

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Sir, in the last few years, our skies are getting crowded and they are likely to get more crowded in the next few years. So, naturally, we need a strict control. This statistical statement of the number of accidents is not satisfactory. Sometimes one accident can claim the lives of a few hundred people. Numerically it may be one accident but it will kill hundreds of people and will result in a loss of several hundred crores of rupees. So, though the Government's reply is affirmative to the query whether it is giving top priority, the remaining part is totally contradictory.

The DGCA's budget is increased by only Rs.1.3 crore in a year and the DGCA - not the Minister and his confidants - is expected to do something with air safety. So, the DGCA must be made competent and powerful. It must have full personnel. It must have the budgetary allocation to fight with the crowded Indian sky. In this regard, I would like to say that the Standing Committee on Civil Aviation, in the last couple of years, has made a suggestion to the Government to make our DGCA a strong, independent regulatory and supervisory authority. I would like to know what the Government is doing in this regard to make our DGCA a totally independent, regulatory, and supervisory authority, like FAA, to control the Indian skies.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Sir, this is a very good suggestion. I will definitely have it in mind. Sir, the hon. member will appreciate one thing. We are trying our level best to reach the goal within a span of six months. Once the Air Marshal Seth Committee's report comes, we will definitely give utmost thinking on it...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN (MUMBAI - NORTH EAST): This Committee does not prohibit you to work. Will you wait till the Committee report comes?

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : I agree...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : What is this? Do you appoint a Committee and sleep over it?...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Sir, to make it independent tomorrow the report is required. If I say that it cannot be done, I have to observe certain formalities if I want to make it independent. Then comes the questions like who is the appointing authority or who are the Members or who will select them or whether I will select them or it goes to the Boards and then come the P.E.S.B., A.C.C., D.G.C.A. etc.

[Translation]

By the time the process is completed, I may not be in the office but the Report would not have come.

[English]

The system is such that even if I want a Chairman, I have to write about it and it goes with all the formalities and it will come after six months. Now, what I am trying to do is that instead of going to cut short this once, if we get the Committee report then we can immediately think of what my hon. friend Shri Mahajan has suggested to make it independent. If it is independent then the question of risking of Minister will not come.

So, I am suggesting it because railway safety comes to me. Railway safety reports, their auditing and appointments come under the Civil Aviation Ministry. These will definitely be taken into consideration and I will say that after getting the report I will take some decision on that.

SHRI E. AHAMED : Sir, we do appreciate the steps taken by the hon. Minister to improve the safety measures. But, at the very same time, I would like to ask the hon. Minister one important question. Is it a fact that the ageing aircraft like the Boeing 737 which was involved in the incident at Visakhapatnam and other places and the Airbus AB-300 are also the reason for the threat to safety of air journey? I want to know whether the Government will take into consideration the phasing out of these ageing, 20 or 23 years' old AB-300 aircraft which is really a threat to the safety of air journey and also the old and dilapidated Boeing 737 aircraft which no country will put into operation. But, unfortunately, the Indian Airlines is still having these aircraft.

There is another thing. The hon. Minister must be knowing as to what happened with regard to the accident of a private airline in Bangalore some time back. The engineering wing of some private airline is not functioning well. They are not giving the safety aspect the paramount consideration like the Indian Airlines or the Air India.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what steps he would like to take in this matter and also about the suggestion given by my friend Shri Mahajan to make the D.G.C.A. independent and competent and also well-equipped like the F.A.A. in America.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Sir, as far as the Boeing 737 aircraft is concerned, it is 15 years' old according to international standards. I have already issued a direction what whichever aircraft is overaged.

[Translation]

So long as clearance is not given by D.G.C.A. and the engineering section, no airlines can operate its flights.

SHRI E. AHAMED : Such incidents have occurred thereafter also.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : A machine is after all a machine. At times new machines also malfunction. While this was very old one. We are interested in replacing the old aircrafts with new ones as soon as possible.

[English]

I have already given the instructions. I have told the D.G.C.A. to have periodical inspections and even random inspection as to whether all aircraft, whether they belong to the Indian Airlines or the Air India or the private airlines are in good condition. He must have it and give a monthly or even weekly report which should be submitted to my Ministry as to how many aircraft they have inspected and what are the random inspections they have done strictly. They are taking all measures for this. As far as making the D.G.C.A. independent, I have already taken up this matter into consideration.

After getting the Air Marshall Seth Committee Reprt, we will definitely look into it and then, we will take a further decision on it... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : There have already been five supplementaries.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : This is a decision of the House not to have more than five supplementaries on any question.

(Interruptions)

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA : You are not encouraging the youngsters... (Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : In such a case, you should allow an half-an-hour discussion. ... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I am sorry.

Regularisation of Casual Labourers

*204. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV :

SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to regularise the services of a large number of casual labourers in his Ministry during the current financial year;

(b) if so, the details and financial implications thereof;

(c) whether casual labourers rendered jobless due to closure of Steam Loco Sheds in the country are also proposed to be rehabilitated; and