

[*English*]

Battle Tank, Arjun

*324. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA :
DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELLA :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the present position with regard to the production of the indigenous battle tank 'Arjun'; and

(b) the reasons attributed for failure to achieve the objective?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) Government have approved the series production of indigenously developed main battle tank Arjun.

(b) Does not arise.

[*Translation*]

PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the original question which I had asked regarding the 'Sampadan' indigenous battle tank, was raised before the House in such a form and the answer to that question was also given by the hon. Minister in this way. My original question was to when it was presumed to produce the fully indigenous tank in our country and the time by which it was likely to be produced. To my knowledge, Late Smt. Indira Gandhi had made its concept in 1974 and it was aimed that after completion of research etc; its production will be started in 1984 with the investment of rupees fifteen and a half crores but its production did not take place till 1997. I came to know that after spending rupees 307.48 crores in 1995, the Government had decided to discontinue its production. Later, it was decided that bringing with some modification ...(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER : Prof. Mehta, this time is also very short. You have to ask the question.

[*Translation*]

PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : I would like to know why such a delay took place in achieving the target of production. If such a delay takes place, what will be the fate of our security?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question raised by the hon. Member, is very important. It is true that this scheme had been approved in 1974 but

from 1974 to 1987 i.e. a period of about 13 years, lapsed to make planning and mobilise the basic and essential equipments for the production of that tank as it took much time to produce or to import the necessary machinery and equipment for the same. In real sense, the work of production of this tank began after 1987. Today, we are in 1999. Though 12 years have passed, it is not true that nothing has been produced so far.

PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : It has been 25 years and not 12 years.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Mr. Speaker, Sir, as regards the work from 1974 to 1987, no production of tank had taken place in India before this period. When it was decided to prepare new model of the indigenous tank, the work had to be started afresh which took much time. When the allocation of money was made for the first time in 1974 it was rupees 15 and a half crores, and later on it was enhanced to rupees 56 crores 55 lacs in 1980 and when we came to the situation of producing tanks after completion of the basic works in 1987, then rupees 280 crores 80 lacs had already been allocated for this. Afterwards, the work commenced and the process of bringing all essential items for it started. In 1993-94, 15 tanks were handed over to the Army which had been produced first. After that it was to be ensured as what were the weaknesses in their use. The trial test of the same was required to be carried out, which began there.

12.00 Hrs.

So, the process of eliminating all the weaknesses of the tanks and producing the same, is on the way now and I am happy that the Army has not only given approval to this tank but also has given orders to the Avadi factory some time back for production of 124 tanks. Therefore, today we find ourselves on such a stage that we are going to start production of the indigenous tanks.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER : Please ask a pointed supplementary question otherwise, you will not get the reply.

[*Translation*]

PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the M.B.T. Arjun tank has proved to be better than other good tanks. However, I have come to know that though the work of production of 124 tanks will be taken up, yet it has been planned to import tanks from abroad especially from Russia. Nevertheless, the field test of the imported

tanks has not been carried out so far. What is the intention of the Government behind this? Would you please state the same?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Question Hour is over, the Minister can send the reply in writing.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Impact of Star and Zee TV on Doordarshan

*325. COL. (RETD.) SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the terms and conditions for allowing the telecast rights to Star and Zee TV;

(b) the impact of these TV channels on programmes being telecast from various TV centres in the country; and

(c) the steps being taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to counter the impact of telecast by Star and Zee TV?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN):

(a) There is no law to regulate satellite channels and consequently no restriction on terms and conditions have so far imposed on Zee and Star TV.

(b) No study of the impact of these TV channels on programmes being telecast from various TV centres in the country is undertaken.

(c) Prasar Bharati has informed that it is Doordarshan's constant endeavour to bring about qualitative improvement in its programmes with a view to sustain the interest of the viewers and to enable its programmes to compete successfully with the programmes telecast by other satellite channels.

[Translation]

Uplinking of Akashwani Kendras with INSAT

*326. SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the name of the Akashwani Kendras linked with INSAT till 31st December, 1998;

(b) the benefits of this uplinking;

(c) whether the Government propose to uplink all the Akashwani Kendras of the country with INSAT; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN):

(a) In all, 18 Akashwani Kendras including Akashwani Kendra at Delhi and Kendras at 17 state capitals viz. Mumbai, Chennai, Calcutta, Shimla, Lucknow, Jaipur, Srinagar, Patna, Shillong, Guwahati, Cuttack, Itanagar, Trivandrum, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Bhopal have uplinking facilities to link the radio programmes with INSAT.

(b) (i) The Akashwani Kendras having uplinking facility can beam up their programmes to the satellite which can then be relayed by any Akashwani Kendra through down linking.

(ii) Relay of news/regional programmes by Akashwani Kendras has been possible through this networking.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

[English]

Budget allocation for Airports in Gujarat and Maharashtra

*327. SHRI ARVIND KAMBLE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state: