

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government against the private firms and erring officials?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) Airports Authority of India (AAI) had issued license to M/s Punjab Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), a State Government Undertaking for the tourism counter at IGI airport. A complaint was received by AAI that PTDC has leased it out to a Patiala based private transport company. The matter has been investigated and no counters are being used illegally by private firms.

MoU between DRDO and Periyar Trust

2416. DR. SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has entered into a MoU with M/s. Periyar Trust for research into frost bite of Indian soldiers on the Siachin glacier;

(b) if so, the details of the MoU and the financial commitments, if any; and

(c) whether any office space in the Ministry of Defence buildings is proposed to be provided for the researchers deployed by the Periyar Trust?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) In order to make optimum use of S&T expertise and infrastructure available in the country, DRDO undertakes various programmes/projects in partnership with industries, academic institutions and other research centres. DRDO is already working with about 50 academic institutions/universities in the country in certain research areas needed. In furtherance of this drive, DRDO has signed an MoU with Periyar Maniammai College of Technology for Women (PMCTW), Thanjavur, a Government approved all women technical institute, to foster joint research in selected areas for growth of indigenous defence technology. Another objective of this MoU is to promote empowerment of women. Under this MoU, a task costing Rs. 2 lakh to develop a computer simulation model to identify the laser parameters for laser photodynamic therapy for frost bite has been approved for this institute. However, no funding has been done so far.

(c) No, Sir.

Losses of Air India

2419. SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Air India continued to incur additional losses during the last five months (October, 1998 to February, 1999);

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps that are proposed to be taken to take the airline out of the red?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. As per the provisional results of October, 1998 to January, 1999, Air India had incurred loss of Rs. 80.10 crores as against budgeted loss of Rs. 109.04 crores.

The losses are mainly because of increase in expenditure on account of interest and depreciation on aircraft, reduction in yield due to increased competition and cost of operations, increase in wage bill and other staff costs and landing, handling and navigational charges and depreciation of rupee value.

Air India Limited has taken the following steps to improve the performance:—

- (i) Marketing efforts have been stepped up to generate additional revenue.
- (ii) Network rationalization and consolidation with emphasis placed on route profitability.
- (iii) Reduction in expenditure on outside repairs of aircraft by undertaking more in-house repairs.
- (iv) Several posts of India based officers abroad have been abolished.

[Translation]

Development of Chitrakoot as National Tourist Place

2420. SHRI RAMANAND SINGH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any request to declare Chitrakoot as a national tourist place keeping in view its cultural, natural, social and religious importance; and