

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR) : Let it be taken up tomorrow.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : It cannot be taken up tomorrow, since it is listed for today.

SHRI BASU DEV ACHARIA (BANKURA) : What is the difficulty if it is taken up tomorrow ?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL (BHANDARA) : This question could not have been listed on the Agenda unless prior concurrence of the Minister was obtained. And, if it is listed on the Agenda, it should be taken up. Every item listed on the Agenda should be taken up including this Short Notice Question.

SHRI RAM NAIK : If the Parliamentary Affairs Minister's argument is to be held, then Papers cannot be laid on the Table.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : If you can go back to the item, Paper Laid on the Table, why can't you go back to the Short Notice Question ?

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : I am neither opposed to the Short Notice Question nor going back to an item on the Agenda. The question is of time. If the Chair permits, the Minister is ready to answer it. You are also ready to put the question.

12.52 hrs.

(MR. SPEAKER in the Chair)

SHRI CHITTA BASU (BARASAT) : Sir, the point to be taken note of is, the Short Notice Question is different from other variety of Questions. Here, the consent of the Minister is very much significant and important. Therefore, it is the Minister who has to decide whether he is willing to reply it today or tomorrow.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : His consent is necessary for admissibility only.

MR. SPEAKER : The Short Notice Question was admitted with the consent of the Minister.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

Grant of Permission to Tata Singapore Airways

SNQ 2. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration for the grant of permission to Tata-Singapore Airways;

(b) if so, the details thereof and since when the proposal has been under Government's consideration;

(c) the present status of the proposal; and

(d) the time by which the decision is likely to be taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (d) A proposal was received from M/s Tata Industries Ltd. in February 1995, to operate a domestic airline in India with 40% equity participation by Singapore Airlines. The proposal has not been approved by the Government so far.

[Translation]

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN (MUMBAI-NORTH) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it would be rare to find an instance of such a country throughout the world wherein foreign capital investment has been allowed in domestic air services in the field of Civil Aviation. That is why I feel that our country is unique in this respect as we are considering the proposal of foreign Capital Investment in the field of Civil Aviation.

I have held the post of Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Civil Aviation for three years. Hence I would like to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister towards a recommendation of the Parliamentary Committee. The Committee has made a recommendation in its report submitted last year that—

[English]

"This is a dangerous trend. Let the Indian owned Organisations, be private or public, compete and flourish. The entry of foreign carriers, through joint ventures, will create hub and spoke within the country. It will ruin the Indian Carriers. We still cannot compete in foreign market because growth of Air India in particular will be hampered and the only way to survive is to protect our equity participation and it will hit the Indian Airlines badly also."

[Translation]

For the last two years, the issue of equity participation with Singapore Airlines is being discussed. As the situation stands today it does not appear that the Minister has, unfortunately, taken any decision in this regard. Singapore Airlines is one of the best Airlines of the world and if it is allowed to enter the area of domestic operations,

[English]

it will be a death knell for the Indian Airlines and all the other domestic carriers in the country.

[Translation]

Therefore I want a clear-cut assurance from the Hon'ble Minister in this regard. Would the Government give an assurance to the House that under no circumstances would the foreign capital investment be allowed in the field of Civil Aviation.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Mr. Speaker, Sir if I had given a complete reply, the Honble Member would not have got the opportunity to put the Supplementary question and I would have been deprived of his esteemed opinion. So I wanted him to have his say.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Thank you very much. I have already said what I wanted to, now it is your turn to speak the same.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : What can I say except to agree to it. It is true that ever since this Government has been formed, we have welcomed foreign investment in several areas. But where the future of twenty two thousand or eighteen thousand employees of Airport Authority of India is at stake and as Shri Mahajan has stated that throughout the world, no country has ever allowed the foreign Airlines to operate in their domestic air operations, therefore, the United Front Government would also like to have only Indian Airlines aircrafts plying on the domestic routes and not the Singapore Airlines. This decision has already been taken by my Department whichever applications are received in the Foreign Investment Bureau are taken up for consideration. At times such applications after acceptance are forwarded to this Department but I make it clear that—

[English]

equity participation not only by the foreign airlines, if any equity is connected with the foreign airlines, that also should not be given an opportunity to be invested in India. That decision also has been taken.

We are thinking of a policy wherein the capacity will be determined before giving permission to new flights. Before giving permission to any new airlines, we have to see whether we can sustain the capacity of the Indian airspace, airports and passengers. We have that also in mind.

I am thankful to you for your question. I hope the entire House will support my Department for this stand.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : I am encouraged by the answer of the hon. Minister. I have two small queries to ask. In his oral reply, in a general way, the hon. Minister has said 'no' to the proposal. However, the written reply still says that no decision has been taken so far on the late Singapore Airlines proposal. Is the hon. Minister ready to make a categorical statement that the application of the Tata Singapore Airlines is rejected based on this policy ? He has to make this categorical statement. Is the hon. Minister aware that the Ministry of Industry of his own United Front Government has recommended allowing automatic equity participation to the tune of 51 per cent in some new sectors which include, civil aviation, agriculture, and mining ?

If the Ministry of Industry has made a proposal of allowing 51 per cent automatic equity participation, the answer given by the hon. Minister does not stand to the scrutiny of truth. I, therefore, want the hon. Minister to make an outright rejection of Tata Singapore Airlines proposal. I also want him to say in this House that the Ministry of Industry proposal of automatic equity participation to the tune of 51 per cent will also be rejected by the Government.

13.00 hrs

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : As a Minister I cannot interfere with the functioning of the other Ministers. But my Ministry is having every right either to accept it or to reject it. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Once Government says 51 per cent, then automatically you did not have any right. The right will not be with you.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : The Ministry has to give the licence.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Yes.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : There are 32 items today on automatic foreign equity participation. If Civil Aviation area is included into that, nobody will come to you to ask.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : We welcome the foreign equity participation, but there are certain areas. My Department, as far as Indian Airlines, the domestic airline is concerned, we have said 'no' to foreign named airlines and no investment directly or indirectly connected with any foreign airlines in this country is allowed. If an Indian wanted to have a company, he is most welcome. We said that definitely we welcome it. We will not allow any foreign airline to fly on the Indian sector. That we have made it clear. Whether I give it in a written reply or oral answer, the answer is the same.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Are you outright rejecting this ?

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : Outright, I am telling that at present this is the policy of the Government.

[Translation]

Why are you insisting on a testimony in this regard.

[English]

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : If this is the policy, you say that you have outright rejected this proposal. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : We have a constraint of time.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : You have the policy and you have to implement it. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM : If you want to reject it, there is a way but in the Power Policy we have clearly said that this is our policy.

[Translation]

Death certificate is to be issued to some and birth certificate is to be issued to some. The Child may have arrived in the world but it takes time to issue his birth certificate.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

[Translation]

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY (CHHAPRA) : Mr. Speaker, Sir Two M.P.s of Bihar have been arrested ... *(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : You will not be able to complete the Business of the House like this.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I seek your cooperation today.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (CALCUTTA SOUTH) : What about the position in the all party Leaders' meeting?

MR. SPEAKER : That is what I am going to say ...

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please no. It will not go on record.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : What about the position ?

MR. SPEAKER : I am going to announce. You are so impatient !

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down now. I have not allowed you. It is not going on record.

(Interruptions)...

MR. SPEAKER : The decision of the all party Leaders' meeting is as follows :

This Constitution (Amendment) Bill will be discussed.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : As it is.

MR. SPEAKER : As it is.

And two hours' time has been earmarked for discussion on this Constitution (Amendment) Bill.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : When ?

MR. SPEAKER : Today.

We have some mandatory business to transact. The Finance Bill has to be passed and it has to go to the President. After his approval, it has to go to the Rajya Sabha. Tomorrow being Friday, the Private Members' business is there. The decision of the All Party Leaders is that we would first complete the transaction of the Business listed in today's Order Paper. As soon as it is over, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill will be taken up, discussed and will be passed.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : There is no time.

MR. SPEAKER : As soon as this Business is over.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : We are sorry. I do not know why the All Party Leaders sometimes say sorry, that they have agreed for this. I do not know. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Why you want to be sorry ?

(Interruptions)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : In the meeting, I said that it may be done without any discussion. Therefore, let it not be put to us. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : What else do you want ?

(Interruptions)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : I did say that there should be no discussion, no necessity. That I want to be on record ... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Listen to me. You sit down. You cannot stand up.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Passing the Bill at one o'clock or at six o'clock, does it make any difference ? The Bill is to be taken up today. But we have certain mandatory things to be performed. The Finance Bill has to be passed. It has to go to the President. It has to go to the Rajya Sabha. Why do you not understand that ? We will finish this and then take up this Bill.

* Not recorded.