

(d) the details of strategies worked out by Postal Department to compete with private agencies which are expanding profitably?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) :

#### Telecommunications

(a) and (b). In the Department of Telecom, all the works pertaining to maintenance are carried out by the Department only. However, some jobs such as cable laying, duct construction, construction of overhead alignments, computerisation etc. are given on contract to private parties, depending on the local needs.

#### Postal

In order to provide basic postal facility extensively, Department of Post have been allowing licenced postal agents to operate under specific terms and conditions to sell stamps and stationery and book registered articles. Individual, Firm or Society are allowed agencies for sale of stamps and stationery. Similarly, in order to provide basic postal services in rural area not having such services and where opening of a post office is justified, scheme of Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendras has been introduced in 1995. Under this scheme Gram Panchayat at the Headquarter of village where post office is justified, is allowed to set up Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendra to provide sale of stamps and stationery, book registered articles and deliver unaccountable articles in the village and provide facility for small saving schemes.

(c) and (d). Department is modernising postal services with induction of technology and computer in different areas of activity. Computer-based counter machines providing efficient responsive and error free service are already operating in about 2600 counters in the country. Modernisation of mail processing in important nodal points to handle large volume of mail has also been undertaken and two Air Mail Processing Centres have been set up at Mumbai and Chennai respectively. Computers have also been introduced for different areas of operations in Saving Bank, Postal Life Insurance and Material Management. Introduction of Track and Trace in Speed Post is also intended to make the service more customer-friendly.

A Business Development Directorate within Department of Post has been set up w.e.f. 1.2.1996 to provide focussed management and marketing of premium product and for modernisation of the procedures of handling such products.

#### 50% Concession to Persons in Train Fares

227. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO :  
SHRI K.D. SULTANPURI :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the categories of persons which have been given

50 percent concessions in train fares by the Government during the last six months;

(b) the loss of revenue suffered by the Government every year on this account;

(c) the criterion fixed by the Government to issue free Travel Railway passes/concession passes to the people;

(d) whether any free travel railway passes/train concession passes have been issued during the last six months;

(e) if so, the details thereof alongwith the categories of persons;

(f) whether it is a fact that these passes are being misutilised by the people; and

(g) if so, the corrective measures taken by the Government in the regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) The Railways grant standard 50% concession in fare to Deaf and Dumb persons, Unemployed Youths for interviews in PSUs including Government Offices/Statutory Body/Municipal Corporation/Government Undertaking/University/Public Sector Banks, Students, Artists, Coolies, Marine Engineers Apprentices, Sportsmen, Bharat Scouts and Guides, Dronacharya Awardees, Police Awardees, Parents accompanying National Bravery Awardee, National Awarded Teachers and Press Correspondents. These categories of persons have continued to avail this standard concession during the last 6 months. Besides, 50% concession has been granted to persons for attending the conferences and National Integration Camps of educational, cultural and social organisations.

(b) Railways are losing approximately Rs. 200 crores per annum on account of various concessions granted to different categories of passengers.

(c) As per extant guidelines, Complimentary Card Passes are issued, with the personal approval of Minister of Railways, to the following :

Category 'A' : Former Ministers/Ministers of State/Deputy Ministers in the Ministry of Railways.

Category 'B' : Organisations engaged in social, cultural, educational, sports and welfare activities.

Category 'C' : Eminent Persons engaged in above mentioned activities.

Category 'D' : Others which may include card passes on compassionate/medical grounds, etc.

Card Passes are issued either in First Class or Second Class depending upon the status of the Organisation/Individual, at the discretion of Minister of

Railways. In deserving cases, permission to travel in First AC Class and also for taking a companion in the same class/second class is also given. The passes issued are valid for one year only, except in deserving and exceptional cases as decided by the Minister of Railways.

Complimentary Card Passes are available over one or more Zonal Railways with validity period usually not exceeding one year at a time. The Card Pass entitles the holder to perform rail journeys from any station to any station and any number of times.

(d) Yes, Sir.

- (e) (i) Former Members of Parliament  
 (ii) Arjuna Award Winners, Olympic Medalists and Gold Medalists of Asian and Commonwealth Games.  
 (iii) Presidents and Secretaries of National Sports Federations (NSFs) and State Olympic Associations (SOAs) affiliated to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).  
 (iv) Recipients of Gallantry Award and widows of winners of Gallantry Awards (Chakra series)  
 (v) Complimentary Card Passes at the discretion of the Minister of Railways to organisations and individuals.

(f) No cases of misutilisation of free passes/train concession passes have come to notice during the last six months.

(g) The ticket checking staff have standing instructions to treat persons travelling with improper tickets/free passes/train concession passes as per extant rules and charge them accordingly.

[Translation]

#### Time Allotted to Nepali Programmes

228. SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) the time allotted to each day to Nepali Programmes on Doordarshan in various States particularly in Maharashtra;

(b) whether the Government have received any proposal to increase the time allotted to Nepali programmes;

(c) if so, the details thereof, State-wise; and

(d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) Only Doordarshan Kendra, Calcutta (West Bengal) is telecasting Nepali programmes for a duration of 10 minutes on every Monday, Wednesday, Friday

and 15 minutes on every Tuesday. No Nepali programme is being telecast by Doordarshan Kendra, Mumbai in Maharashtra

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d). Do not arise.

[English]

#### Norms for Telecasting Epic Serials

229. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) the norms fixed for telecast of epic serials on Doordarshan;

(b) whether the Government propose to serialise and telecast Hindi serials on ancient and classic dramas in Gujarat; and

(c) if so, the details of the plans proposed to be drawn up in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No separate norms are fixed for telecast of epic serials on Doordarshan and the proposals for such serials are considered under sponsored category by the Selection Committee alongwith other proposals

(b) The proposals for telecast of Hindi serials on ancient and classic dramas in Gujarat, as and when received, will be considered by the Selection Committee alongwith other such proposals

(c) Doordarshan will continue to endeavour, as in the past, to select such sponsored serials which propagate high socio-cultural values, seek to inculcate in the viewers equal respect for different religions, promote national integration and provide wholesome entertainment.

#### Lackness of Air Transport Services

230. SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that lack of adequate and quality air transport services has hampered the country's potential for tourism development and growth;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the remedial measures taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) To ensure that air transport services grow in a balanced manner throughout the country, route dispersal guidelines have been issued requiring operators of trunk routes to provide capacity on other routes also including the North East, Jammu and Kashmir, Andaman and