

ports? Or is it free from duty also? I would like to know this from him. The other day, I had put a question and you were kind enough to direct the Minister to give the answer in writing because the time was over. So far, I have not received the Ministry's information though one month has already gone. With all that, I also understand Tirupati has paid Rs. 6 crore to the Airports Authority of India. I do not want a duty free shop there.

But I want the Minister to increase the frequency of flights between Tirupati, Chennai and Hyderabad. This I had asked, though it was not concerned with that question. Because he said 'duty free' I asked whether he is a 'duty free' Minister also!

MR. SPEAKER : I have no objection if he likes to respond to it.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR : I am duty bound to the Constitution and to this House. Though it does not exactly come under the purview of this question. I am responding to the hon. former Chief Minister and hon. Shri Reddy's query. Regarding the airport at Tirupati and various airports in Andhra Pradesh I had a detailed meeting with the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Chandrababu Naidu. He has been quite helpful and responding.

SHRI N. JANARDHANA REDDY : Are you consulting the Chief Minister for increasing the frequency of air flights also?

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR : I should place it on record that I appreciate the hon. Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. He came all the way to have a structured meeting with me regarding the upgradation of airports and also the aviation links in Andhra Pradesh. We are taking up a plan regarding the renovation of the Tirupati Airport and upgradation at a cost of Rs. 7.2 crore. Also, I am pleased to say that we are upgrading the Tirupati Airport, and will be commissioning it and giving it to the people before Andhra Day, that is, November 1, 1998.

Regarding more air links to Tirupati for having a *darshan* of Balaji, it is also under serious consideration.

Losses to Railways

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*326. DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELLA :
SHRI K.P. NAIDU :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Railways have incurred losses of crores of Rupees due to defect in Computer obtained for Ticket Booking during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof zone/division-wise;

(c) whether any inquiry has been conducted in this regard;

(d) if so, the findings thereof; and

(e) the action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR):
(a) to (e) A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

Statement

(a) and (b) Railways have incurred revenue losses due to irregularities and defects noticed in Computer Based Ticketing Machines for issue of unreserved/season tickets. The details are as under :

- i) SEASON TICKET PRINTING SYSTEM (STEPS): This system was installed at Churchgate State of Western Railway. Irregularities were detected in the system during the month of September/October, 95, causing an approximate loss of Rs. 40-45 lakhs. The system has since been discontinued.
- ii) SELF PRINTING TICKET MACHINES (SPTMS): As a result of irregularities committed by the railway staff, the approximate loss of revenue on this account has been as under :

Railway	Name of the station	Approximate amount of leakage of revenue
Central	Pune, Bhandup and Bhopal	Rs. 34,000
Northern	Allahabad	Rs. 1.85 lakhs
South Central	Secunderabad	Rs. 1,660

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Enquiries were conducted in all these cases by multi-disciplinary committees of the railways. In one case relating to the fraud committed on Western Railway for issue of Season Tickets, enquiry was also conducted by the CBI. A Committee was also constituted by the Ministry consisting of officers from Commercial, Finance & Stores Departments to enquire into all aspects of functioning of these machines and make suitable recommendations.

The main finding in the enquiry conducted for Season Ticket Printing System on Western Railway was that design of the system was defective as it enabled an operator to manipulate the date files containing record of transactions due to lack of proper security procedures;

In the Self-Printing Ticketing Machines on Allahabad Station of Northern Railway the facility of grant of refund from any counter of the machines, which were not inter-linked for want of centralised accounting system, was mis-used by the booking clerks. On Pune, Bhandup and Bhopal stations of Central Railway, the booking clerk inserted a blank paper for manipulating the printer and saved pre-

printed stationery which was used for printing ticket of higher denomination and balance money was mis-appropriated by the booking clerks and on Secunderabad station of South-Central Railway, the actual amount of the ticket was accounted as Rs. 2 instead of actual value of the ticket and balance money was misappropriated by operator. This irregularity was detected by checking the records of collected tickets.

The Committee made the following recommendations:

- i) The SPTM should not be Personal Computer (PC) based.
 - ii) Organisations of proven expertise should develop computerised SPTMs for railways.
 - iii) The allotment of SPTMs should be based on limited tenders based on pre-qualifications of vendors.
 - iv) Standard format of Annual Maintenance Contract should form a part of the Tender conditions. The system should have built-in diagnostics to check the components.
 - v) All the data should be stored in battery backed-up Erasable Programmable Memory (EPROM) in Computer so that it can be retrieved at any point of time.
 - vi) Staff of Commercial, Traffic and Accounts Office should be properly trained.
 - vii) Standard Joint Procedure should be issued for accountal and inspection.
- (e) The following action has been taken :
- The STEP system installed on Western Railway has been discontinued.
 - The recommendations of the committee in para (d) above have been implemented.
 - The facility of cancellation of ticket for grant of refund in SPTMs has been restricted to only those counters from which the ticket is issued.
 - CBI has filed the charge-sheets for prosecution of 7 railway officials and one person of the company which supplied the machine.
 - Major penalty charge-sheets to 17 railway employees and minor penalty charge-sheets to 16 railway employees, have been issued.

DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELLA : I thank the hon. Minister of Railways for giving a detailed answer. I want to know whether the same licence for Keltron com-

pany is continuing in the Central, Northern and South-Central Railways and if so why has it not been cancelled or discontinued because this poor developing country cannot afford to lose crores of rupees in this way ?

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in my opinion, the hon'ble Member had wanted to know about the functioning of the self-printing ticketing machine in Sikanderabad. In its reply I am to state that for the time being it has been shut down and the work is being carried out with old manual system. As far as the question of 'Keltron' is concerned, this company is owned by the State Government of Kerala. This is an Undertaking of the Kerala Government. As far as the question of involving security system is concerned, so that it could not be misused, the company is being advised in this regard.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Dr. Suguna Kumari Chellamella, second supplementary.

DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELLA : No further supplementary.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE : Mr. Speaker, all computers are deliberately being put out of order. At every railway station, tickets are sold in black market. The effort is being made to malign the Railway Ministry. There is a big racket behind it and people are doing illegal business. Is the hon'ble Minister aware of it ? If yes, has he ordered an enquiry into this matter.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the efforts are on to make improvement in the software. As I have stated earlier, we are trying to evolve in built system to prevent beguilement. As far as the question of inquiry is concerned, the CBI has conducted an inquiry in one case and the case has been filed against some people in the court. The departmental proceedings are going on against some other people.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Sukinda Chrome Ore Mines

*322. SHRI NARESH PUGLIA : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Pressure to clear Sukinda lease" as reported in the Statesman dated April 16, 1998;