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Railway Network at Ponnani Town in Kerala

3380. SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to bring Ponnani town (Southern Railways, Palakkad Division, Kerala) in the railway network;

(b) if so, the steps being taken in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Constraint of resources.

Revamping of Defence Services

3381. SHRI P. UPENDRA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Chief of Army Staff has recently suggested a revamp of the higher defence organisation in the country and devolution of greater financial powers to the three services chiefs; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) Revamping of defence forces and delegation of financial powers is an ongoing process and suggestions/proposals have been received in this regard from the three Services' headquarters from time to time. Delegation of financial powers were made to Navy for Revenue Expenditure under New Management Strategy (NMS) in 1994. Similar delegation of financial powers have been made to Army and Air Force in April, 1997.

SCs/STs Pilots

3382. SHRI MAHESH KANODIA : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of OBC and SC/ST pilots working in the Air India and the Indian Airlines at present;

(b) the total number of OBC and SC/ST pilots undergoing the training at present;

(c) whether the Government have taken any steps for the employment of more OBC pilots; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) At present, a total number of 62 SC, ST and OBC pilots are working in Air India and Indian Airlines.

(b) 16 pilots in Air India and 15 pilots in Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademy belonging to SC, ST and OBC are at present undergoing training.

(c) and (d) Special recruitment drives are launched to fill up the vacancies earmarked for SC, ST and OBC pilots.

[Translation]

Army Recruitment Centre in Maharashtra

3383. SHRI R.S. GAVAI : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are contemplating to open an Army Recruitment Centre in Amravati district of Maharashtra; and

(b) if so, the time by which it is likely to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Extension of Flights Via Ranchi upto Bokaro

3384. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government contemplate to extend flight number I.C. 809 and 810 of Indian Airlines operating between Patna and Delhi via Ranchi, upto Bokaro (Bihar);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) to (c) No, Sir. The runway at Bokaro which is under the control of Steel Authority of India Limited is only 5000 feet with low Load Classification Number. This is suitable only for smaller aircraft. Shortage of smaller capacity aircraft does not permit operation of service from this airport by Indian Airlines. Private operators are being encouraged to include new stations including Bokaro, in their network, subject to viability.