

Transportation of Goods

1350. SHRI MOHAN SINGH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) The details of agreement between the Container Corporation of India and Indian Railways for transportation of goods;

(b) whether, the Railways held responsible for those goods which are booked by the Container Corporation of India and damaged inside the Railway premises; and

(c) if not, the name of the agency which is held responsible for such damaged and against whom claims of compensation filed as per the rules?

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) The agreement between the Ministry of Railways and the Container Corporation of India Ltd. (CONCOR) contains guidelines in respect of booking and delivery of containerised traffic for carriage by Indian Railways, collection of freight and other charges relating thereto, payment of haulage charges by CONCOR to the respective Railways, maintenance of documents relating thereto, settlement of claims of customers etc. and all other rail-related matters specifically agreed upon between both the parties from time to time.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Railways in accordance with the provisions of the Railways Act. 1989 reimburse all claims on container traffic settled by CONCOR while such containers were in Railway's custody. However, CONCOR is responsible for all claims arising out of traffic booked by them.

Funds to Panchayati Raj Institutions

1351. SHRI MOTILAL VORA : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the amount allocated for trainees or office bearers of Panchayati Raj Institutions during the year 1997-98, State-wise;

(b) whether the amount sanctioned to Madhya Pradesh is adequate as compared to the number of such institutions in the State;

(c) if not, whether the Government propose to allocate more funds to the States; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL) : (a) to (d) A provision of Rs. 3 crore was made during 1997-98 for all activities under Panchayati Raj, from

which limited financial assistance was extended to the State Governments on demand, in support of their training and awareness generation effort among Panchayati Raj Institution elected members and functionaries. In 1997-98, on the demand by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Rs. 74.72 lakh was released by the Ministry of Rural Areas & Employment for training and awareness purposes.

[English]

Extension of Madurai-Quilon Passenger Train

1352. SHRI V.M. SUDHEERAN : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the much needed demand for the extension of Madurai-Quilon passenger Train up to Alleppey and for the introduction of an additional Push-Pull train in the Kayankulam-Alleppey-Ernakulam sector; and

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

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) and (b) There have been demands for extension of Madurai-Quilon Passenger to Alleppey and for introduction of additional Pushpull trains on Kayankulam-Alleppey-Ernakulam sector. The same have been examined but not found feasible due to operational and resource constraints.

Production of Sponge Iron

1353. SHRI K.P. NAIDU : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have evolved any long-term policy to encourage sponge iron plants;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the present level of production of sponge iron in the country, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The important policy measures are:

- i) freeing the sector from requirements of licensing and registration, save for certain locational restrictions;
- ii) permitting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) upto 74% of equity and Foreign Technology Collaboration Agreements upto US\$ 2 million on the Automatic Approval route; and
- iii) assisting the sector in obtaining allocation of coal and natural gas.

(c) Production of sponge iron in the country during 1997-98 (Provisional) was 5.31 million tonnes. A State-wise break up is as follows :

State	Production (in million tonnes)
Andhra Pradesh	.083
Bihar	.145
Gujarat	1.701
Karnataka	.055
Madhya Pradesh	.940
Maharashtra	2.161
Orissa	.218
Tamil Nadu	.009
Total :	5.312

Uneconomic International Routes of IA and AI

1354. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the international routes identified by Indian Airlines and Air India as uneconomical; and

(b) the reasons for not allowing private airlines to operate on those uneconomical international routes?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) Indian Airlines has been incurring losses on the Varanasi/Kathmandu route.

Air India has been incurring losses on its operations to USA, Canada, UK, Europe, East Africa, Hong Kong, Japan, Israel, Singapore and South Korea.

(b) Under the current policy, Government does not designate private airlines for operation on international sectors.

Mineral Wealth of Jammu and Kashmir

1355. SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the efforts made by the Government to explore and utilise mineral wealth of Jammu and Kashmir during the last three years;

(b) whether the Government are satisfied with the efforts so far made; and

(c) if not, the further planning of the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) Geological Survey of India (GSI) has conducted mineral investigations

for platinoid Group of Minerals, Gold and Lithium in Kathua, Udhampur and Leh districts of Jammu & Kashmir during the last three years as per the following details:-

(i) Low Lithium content of little economic significance has been analysed in the rocks of Salal area, Udhampur district.

(ii) Content of gold and platinoids in rock of Shurok-Sumda area of Leh district is very low and not encouraging.

(b) Yes, Sir. Government is satisfied with the efforts for exploration of mineral wealth in Jammu & Kashmir. However, exploitation is not possible in view of low metal content.

(c) Question does not arise.

Purchase of Electrical Items by M.E.S.

1356. DR. BIZAY SONKAR SHASTRI : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether rampant corruption in the purchase of electrical items by MES has ever been noticed;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the system adopted by the MES in such purchases and the number of complaints of irregularities and corruption received during each of the last three years; and

(d) the action, the Government propose to take to streamline the system in the purchase of electrical items by MES?

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

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) and (d) Purchases of items by MES are generally made on DGS&D rate - contracts and only in case of emergent requirements, purchases from local markets are authorised for which competitive tenders/quotations are invited. Existing system of purchases followed by MES is functioning smoothly.

West Land Helicopters

1357. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the cost at which the Westland Helicopters were purchased alongwith their life span; and

(b) the reasons for the purchase of these helicopters?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) The cost of 21 Westland helicopters acquired by the then Helicopters Corporation of India Limited (now