

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The details are being finalised.

**Connecting of 'Shirdi' Pilgrimage
Centre by Air Services**

1953. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme for connecting 'Shirdi' Pilgrimage Centre by Air Services in order to boost tourism in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) and (b) There is no civil airstrip / airport available at Shirdi. However, the needs of the air traffic are being met by Aurangabad Airport.

Hindustan Copper Ltd.

1954. SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Hindustan Copper Limited has been incurring losses during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, year-wise; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to make the unit profitable?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) and (b) The financial performance of Hindustan Copper Ltd. during the last three years is as under :

Year	Profit(+)/Loss(-) (Rs. in crores)
1995-96	(+)075.84
1996-97	(-)130.62
1997-98	(-)169.72 (Prov.*)

*Accounting year 1997-98 has been extended by six months i.e. upto September, 1998.

(c) As a part of the turnaround strategy, the following are some of the important steps being taken/ proposed to be taken by the Company for improving its financial viability:

(i) Capital Restructuring of the Company.

(ii) Technological upgradation of Smelter & Refinery at Khetri Copper Complex in Rajasthan from 31,000 TPA to 45,000 TPA.

(iii) Gradual closure of uneconomic mines and unviable operations* with consequential separation of employees under Voluntary Retirement scheme with the funds from National Renewal Fund, Non-Plan loan etc.

(iv) The Company has also taken and initiated a number of innovative measures to effect cost reduction in the existing expenditure on its operations and also in personnel related areas.

U.N. Aid for Poverty Alleviation

1955. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Andhra Pradesh Government have received some U.N. aid for the development of poverty alleviation projects in Mehboobnagar, Kurnool and Anantapur districts;

(b) if so, the total amount UNDP has been invested for these projects during the last three years; and

(c) to what extent this has reduced the poverty in the state?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL) : (a) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting a Poverty Alleviation Project in three districts of Mahaboobnagar, Kurnool and Anantapur since 1996. The basic objective of the project is to demonstrate sustainable and replicable initiatives in social mobilisation for poverty alleviation.

(b) An amount of Rs. 47.68 millions has been invested by UNDP in the three districts.

(c) The poverty reduction in the project area on account of the ongoing UNDP assisted Poverty Alleviation Project has not yet been estimated.

[Translation]

Smoking In Trains

1956. DR. CHINTA MOHAN :
DR. SUSHIL INDORA :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken any action so far to check the smoking in trains;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?