

"Vayudoot" Air Service for Five North Bengal Districts

*87. SHRI SUBODH SEN :
SHRI ANANDA PATHAK :

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether he is aware that of the five North Bengal Districts, namely Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur and Malda only Darjeeling district is connected by air with Calcutta and Delhi through Bagdogra which is also far away from the district headquarters and that the headquarters of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Balurghat and Malda are connected with Calcutta by road and railways but till to date the communication facilities in this region are inadequate;

(b) whether he is aware that speedier communication for this area will not only help the people living in this area but will also be of great use to the administration, particularly at the time of crisis such as natural calamities;

(c) if so whether he is considering to introduce Vayudoot Air Service for this region connecting those districts headquarters with Calcutta on the one end and Gauhati on the other; and

(d) if not, the reasons?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI : A. P. SHARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Cooch-Bihar is included in the list of 14 stations already selected for operation of Vayudoot services in the North Eastern Region. A decision in principle has also been taken to extend 'Vayudoot' services to places other than those in the North Eastern Region. Various

aspects including selection of stations to be served by this service are receiving attention of the Government.

Retiring Age for Air Hostesses in Air India

*88. SHRI E. BALANANDAN : Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) what is the retiring age fixed for the Air Hostesses in the Air India;

(b) what are, the criteria for fixing the age limit differently for males and females working in the airlines; and

(c) the reasons why pregnant women are asked to discontinue?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI A. P. SHARMA) : (a) According to Air India Employees' Service Regulations, and Air Hostess has to retire (i) upon attaining the age of 35 years or (ii) on marriage if it takes place within 4 years of service or on first pregnancy, whichever occurs earlier.

(b) and (c) : Different criteria have been laid down in the case of Air Hostesses and stewards for retirement age since it is considered that age has a telling effect on the personality, smartness and agile physical condition of an airhostess after the age of 35 years. There are certain hazards attached to the flying career, especially in the modern jets, which fly at a very high altitude. The air hostess has to attend to emergencies at times, besides rendering service to the passengers which involves a lot of running about. Therefore, it is felt that an Air Hostess in a state of pregnancy cannot stand the strain. This apart weather turbulences are not an uncommon phenomena in flying which