

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: The hon. Minister, while replying to a earlier question by Mr. Birender Singh Rao, said as a matter of consolation, that in a number of countries of the world, the value of currency is going down and prices are rising. On that background, he also tried to justify what is happening in our country. On that background, may I know from him, whether it is not a fact that in a number of capitalistic countries also where there has been a considerable rise in prices, the corresponding rise in wages outstripped the rise in prices; and as a result of that, the working class does not suffer to the extent to which it is suffering? In view of this, will you evolve a uniform national wage policy in this country?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: As far as the evolution of a national wage policy is concerned, apart from this aspect, it is a must. That is why, we are considering this aspect. But, I am sure, the hon. Member will agree that this is not such a simple matter which can be evolved overnight. That is why, we are looking into the matter and there has been a preliminary report on this, and this is being studied. Let us hope, very soon, it should be possible for us to evolve a national wage policy.

MR. SPEAKER: Mrs Maya Ray.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: He is replying to my question. What about the comparison with the rest of the world? He is on his legs. Let him remain on his legs. That is a very important aspect. Repeatedly, every Finance Minister compares the conditions here with the rest of the world. That is a very relevant point. He is almost replying to that point. Please do not curtail his freedom of speech. He is already on his legs. He was almost on the point of replying.

MR. SPEAKER: I did not ask him to discontinue. He himself sat down.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: You can ask him whether he is willing to reply to that or not. Out of chivalry for Mrs. Ray, he says that he does not want to reply to that.

Facilities for Landing of Boeing 747 Aircraft at Calcutta Airport

*962. **SHRIMATI MAYA RAY:** Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) when will the Calcutta airport be ready for the landing of Boeing 747 planes;

(b) what are the reasons for the delay; and

(c) whether a number of foreign airlines, notably the British Airways, are wanting to fly Boeing 747 through Calcutta airport and would like Air India to introduce the facilities required for the landing of that aircraft at Calcutta airport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): (a) and (b) The runway at Calcutta airport is ready to receive Boeing 747 aircraft. The equipment required for handling such aircraft is yet to be positioned at Calcutta. At present no airline is operating Boeing 747 aircraft to Calcutta

(c) No communication has been received from any foreign airline regarding its decision to operate Boeing 747 aircraft to Calcutta. However, in April 1974, British Airways had inquired from Air India whether they had any intention of equipping Calcutta Airport with Boeing 747 handling equipment. British Airways had mentioned that they only wished to explore the feasibility of handling equipment being positioned at Calcutta Airport by Air India should they

decide to operate Boeing 747 at some future date. Air-India had confirmed to British Airways that as soon as British Airways' future plans were made known they would examine the question of providing the necessary services at Calcutta Airport for the handling of Boeing 747.

SHRIMATI MAYA RAY: Will the hon. Minister kindly tell us as to what steps the Government has taken to justify the amount that has been spent in building one of the finest international airports in our country. If, at the same time, they neglect us by not propagating or giving the right incentive to resume international air services at the Calcutta Airport? What steps have exactly been taken by the Government in this respect.

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH: We are ourselves very anxious that 747 services to Calcutta Airport should start as early as possible and the Government has taken a number of steps, one of them being that the main terminal building has been constructed. The runway has already been widened and strengthened for operational purposes and other facilities have also been provided. It is true that traffic has not picked up even though we tried to persuade international airlines to start services to Calcutta. Our efforts in that direction are continuing. The international airlines have taken a stand that it is not commercially viable to operate 747 services to Calcutta.

SHRIMATI MAYA RAY: In view of the fact that there is the huge continent of South-East Asia, east of Calcutta, what has the Government done in thinking about decentralising the top-heavy Air India administration in Bombay so that they could have a Branch office in Calcutta to give facilities to the travelling public from there. Secondly, the hon. Minister should bear in mind that the north-eastern region contributes considerably to the national economy and it is therefore, essential and legitimate that we should have a proportionate amount of facilities and money ploughed back into that region.

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR): So far as the question of strength of staff at various Airports is concerned, it is determined by the volume of traffic and the work handled at a particular Airport. We would very much like a 747 service to Calcutta and the Airport to be fully utilised. For that purpose, we have built a Hotel also. But the fact remains that the volume of traffic towards East and from East does not justify the operation of 747 by Air India and other Airlines are not yet prepared to operate it. We are pursuing them to operate such services.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: The hon. Minister said that the runway is ready for the purpose of receiving Boeing 747 but the necessary equipment is not available at the Calcutta Airport. May I know why only in other Airports in India this equipment has been made available and for so long steps have not been taken to keep the equipment or to bring the equipment to Calcutta Airport? Why this delay? Is it a part of the definite policy of the Central Government to deny facilities to the eastern region of this country? May I know, if Bombay and Delhi, if not Madras, had been chosen earlier, why Calcutta was not chosen earlier for the purpose? Why Air India is not operating Boeing 747 to Calcutta? Why are you running after the foreign Airlines and persuading them to operate 747 to Calcutta?

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: About Air India, I have already said that it depends upon the volume of traffic from East and to stations East of Calcutta. Our definite policy is to encourage as much traffic as possible to and from Calcutta. About the positioning of the equipment, there will be no problem whatsoever. We can position the equipment as quickly as possible after we know that a particular Airline is ready to operate a 747 service to Calcutta. The equipment costs about Rs. 1 crore. To position the equip-

ment costing Rs. 1 crore and not to have the service will amount to an anomalous situation.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: What about Air India?

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: I have already replied about Air India. They will certainly operate 747 as soon as the volume of traffic emanating towards East and from East of Calcutta justifies it.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Shri Raj Bahadur has given a very confusing reply when he says that, because in future this Boeing 747 may go to Calcutta, in their scale of priorities, they have begun constructing a hotel. I do not know how much the hotel is costing them; he should tell us. He has said that the equipment would cost Rs. 1 crore and he does not want that equipment to lie idle if no planes are coming, but he does not mind a hotel being built if no planes are coming. I do not know who is going to stay in that hotel when there is no 747 service. Is it meant for people who can afford to go and spend week-ends there? What kind of priority is this?

I would like to know whether, if any foreign airline today wishes to operate 747 from Calcutta, if they don't get the necessary landing facilities, they will not be further discouraged. What is the point of view of the Government in this regard.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: The Hon'ble Member is extremely intelligent and I am sure he can understand the answer given, which is not confusing at all. The hotel is not merely for 737's Services.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: But you said so.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: I said that this can help—that it is one of the steps taken. But the hotel is serving and will be serving various international airlines—Air India (three services), BOAC (five services), SAS (one

service), Thai International (five services), RNNC (two services), Bangladesh (two services) and Burma Airlines Corporation (two services). There is no dearth of services to Calcutta. In fact the traffic has also increased from 75,000 in 1971 to 206,000 in 1973. We have taken all possible steps to increase the traffic. To begin a 747 Service, there has to be enough traffic for it and it should not be said later that there is surplus capacity which is being left unutilised.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA: How much do you spend on the hotel?

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR: I have already answered that. I do not have the figures with me at the moment.

Civil Aerodrome, Ahmedabad

*963 **SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR:** Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the runway at Ahmedabad civil aerodrome is not fully satisfactory and/or safe for aircraft, particularly the bigger ones, to land and take off smoothly and efficiently;

(b) whether the said runway needs to be strengthened and resurfaced properly and promptly; and

(c) if so, when will Government take up this work in hand and how will it be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): (a) The main runway at civil aerodrome, Ahmedabad is considered safe and satisfactory for the present aircraft operations.

(b) and (c). No further strengthening of the main runway for the present aircraft operations is required. However, the need for improving its riding qualities is under consideration in the Civil Aviation Department.