

* 6505/6506 Mysore-Nizamuddin Swarnjayanti Express (weekly).

(b) Yes, Sir. In order to cope with seasonal demand, Railways run summer special trains between Bangalore and Delhi. Also, student specials are run to cater to the students going to Bangalore to appear at various entrance examinations.

(c) Introduction of an additional direct train between Bangalore and Delhi is not feasible at present due to operational and resource constraints.

Improving the Quality of Software Professionals

*672. SHRI DEVI PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that immediate steps are required to improve the quality of software professionals in India and increase their number to meet the future requirements of country's IT sector; and

(b) if so, the steps taken or proposed to be taken to ensure better infrastructural facilities, including teaching faculty, in different engineering colleges whom affiliation was granted in different universities by AICTE?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The steps taken or proposed to be taken for improving the quality of IT professionals (including software professionals) are indicated in the statement.

Statement

With a view to generating quality manpower and meeting future requirement of IT sector, this Ministry has recently established the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad, and Indian Institute of Information Technology & Management, Gwalior. The intake in the IITs is also being increased in a phased manner to meet the future requirements of IT Sector. The All India Council for Technical Education has recently set up an All India Board for Information Technology and has also approved inclusion of Information Technology as a branch in Technical Institutions. Many engineering colleges have since introduced IT as a branch and obtained AICTE recognition. Besides AICTE is continuously emphasising the importance of various emerging areas including IT through its Quality Improvement Programme Scheme whereby around 200 teachers have had the opportunity

to undertake higher studies. All universities, engineering colleges and other institutions of higher learning in the country are being networked for a supplementary programme of Distance Education for improving the quality of education including IT education. IITs, IIMs and other institutions have been asked to promote IT related programmes and launch specific courses in association with software industry.

The Ministry of Information Technology has, through a Pilot Project called IMPACT, followed by another project called Sustainability Support Scheme, in selected 14 engineering colleges upgraded the quality of education and training in the press of electronics and computers, including software training and education. Continuing Education Programmes (CEP) were also conducted, each year, by the faculty in these colleges. Infrastructural facilities were also enhanced in the project institutes by providing equipment.

Primary Health Centres

*673. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in the country and the number of those actually functioning;
- (b) the number of PHCs set up in the country during the last five years;
- (c) the average cost per PHC in the country; and
- (d) the average number of persons benefited per PHC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI N.T. SHANMUGAM): (a) The number of Primary Health Centres functioning in the country as on 31.12.98 is 23179.

(b) During the last five years, 1280 Primary Health Centres have been set-up in the country.

(c) In setting-up of a Primary Health Centre Rs. 24.50 lakh as Capital Cost (one time expenditure) and Rs. 13 lakhs recurring/cost per annum is required.

(d) On an average, 30771 persons are benefited by a PHC.

Malnutrition among Children

*674. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state: