

frame, which Shri Tarini Kanta Roy mentioned and now, Shri Kalita has also mentioned, I would like to tell both the Members that it shall take about three years for construction of the terminal from the date of sanction of the project and the award of the work to the contractor.

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA : Sir, this is very good thing that the Government has taken up modernization of Dhubri port and as suggested by IIT Guwahati, they have identified new location for the new terminal building in Dhubri. But the Government of India has already sanctioned a few crores of rupees a few years back, but not a single penny has been utilized till today. This is very important. Although we are speaking about the modernization of port, and the Government of India has sanctioned the money, but not a single paisa was utilized till today. Sir, the National Waterways can play an important and vital role for the cargo transport in our country. What type of cargo can be transported in the National Waterways and what are the steps being taken by the Government of India to increase cargo transportation in the Indian Waterways and whether the Government is going to provide the same facilities to the North-Eastern region in respect of the Dhubri port?

SHRI G.K. VASAN : Sir, transportation of bulk materials such as coal, cement, foodgrains, tea containers is as usual. I would also like to inform the hon. Member that when it is difficult to move the cargo by rail or road, it is transported on the Waterways regularly. Several steps have been taken by the Government to increase the cargo transportation in the National Waterways. One or two which I could mention now include a provision of assured fairway with two meter depth, day navigational route for round the year operations, night navigational facilities in the phased manner, specially, floating of permanent terminal facilities at various locations. Thank you.

Replacement of expatriate pilots

*345. SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the DGCA has asked all the airlines to replace foreign pilots by 31st July, 2010 as the slowdown in the sector had rendered several domestic pilot jobless;

(b) whether Air India and other private flight operators have asked the aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), to extend the deadline for replacing expatriate pilots and they want at least two more years to carry out the change; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the stance of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL) : (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (c) The existing policy for validation of foreign licences is valid upto 31/07/2010. Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had requested Airline Operators to submit their plan for phasing out expatriate pilots alongwith net requirement of expat pilots beyond 31/7/2010. In response to the same, Air India and other scheduled operators have submitted their requests for extension of time for replacing expatriate pilots beyond 31/07/2010. The government has approved extension for one year beyond 31/7/2010.

SHRI B.S. GNANDESIKAN : Sir, as per the reply given by the Minister, one year extension has been granted for the continuance of the foreign pilots as per the request of the Air India and other scheduled operators. Sir, my question will be, through you, Sir, what was the reason stated by Air India and other scheduled operators seeking for extension of a period of foreign pilots when so many Indian pilots are waiting to be employed? Is it a fact many reports appearing in the media that Indian pilots are not capable of flying during monsoon and winter fall? If it is not a fact, then why extension has been granted? If it is a fact, is there any plan with the Ministry to update the training of the Indian pilots so that they will replace foreign pilots when this period of extension expires?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL : Sir, I will answer the second part of his question first which is about whether Indian pilots are capable of flying under any weather conditions. Let me assure him, through you, Sir, that Indian pilots are trained and qualified and comparable to the best anywhere in the world. In fact, every pilot who qualifies has to go through a certain procedure as stipulated, and as everybody knows, flying has to be 100 per cent safe, nothing is 99.9 per cent in aviation. In terms of why pilots from overseas are allowed to fly in India, Sir, while there was, I would say, a stagnation in the aviation industry in the early part of up to 2004-05 because of the global recession then, subsequently, there was a boom in the Indian skies, and as a result of which the aviation sector required far many pilots than what were available. And as all of us would appreciate that pilots have to be segregated into two categories. One is the pilots who sits on the right, who is normally known as co-pilot in common parlance, and the other is the pilot in command, who is the captain of the aircraft, and a captain of an aircraft would be commander who would require much more experience

in terms of flying hours and also being trained on a particular type of aircraft. This is also an important aspect of flying. Therefore, while aviation grew very rapidly, the pilots, and specially pilots in command were in short supply, and that is why, to maintain the momentum and to make sure that airlines are able to fly without any shortage of pilots, foreign pilots were allowed, and as has been mentioned in the answer, airlines were asked that what is their programme of induction of Indian pilots and moving them from the right side, that is co-pilot to be pilot in command.

They have indicated a phased programme. The DGCA has examined all these aspects and undertaken a programme of phased reduction. In fact, just for the information of the hon. Member, as well as, the House the number of pilots 2008-09 was 944, including all airlines. The status in 2009-10 was 686 and now, in January, 2010, it was 562. I am sure, from then to now, the number would have come down further. So, it is a fact that foreign pilots were allowed, but it is also a fact that, as and when our young cadres get trained and move from the right side to the left side, the number of foreign pilots will progressively come down.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Second supplementary.

SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN : No second supplementary, Sir. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN : All right. Mr. Rudy you not ask a question on this. You forgo it so that other can ask questions.

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY : Sir, just a small clarification. It will educate the House. It has nothing to do...*(Interruptions)*... There is no clash of interest, Sir.

Apart from being pilot, I am also a lecture in economics. So, I can't put questions to the Human Resource Development. I am also a lawyer. So, I can't put questions to the Law Department...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please go ahead. We are short of time...*(Interruptions)*... Go ahead...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY : Sir, I am a commercial pilot. But it is without salary. The basic question here, today, is why this concern is coming up again. The reason is that there are 4,000 pilots who are unemployed. These are low-time pilots who can't get employed because they don't have the actual training. Today, there are about 4,000 pilots, including commanders and co-pilots. In the next five years, with the growth, the expectation is that ... we have about 200 commercial aircraft

and the number would go up to 450 -- we will be requiring another 4,000 pilots. My simple point is that for a pilot to move from a co-pilot's seat to a commander's seat, it requires an expenditure of Rs. 70-80 lakhs. That is a huge investment which the airlines don't want to do because they are in a loss. My question is very simple. In the present situation you don't allow the expats to come and fly because none of the airlines would agree and every year you would be extending it. So, this would become a frivolous question that you ask every year. We have to find a solution to it and a solution can take place only when there is incentive to the Indian pilots in the airlines in India. You should give incentives to them and there should be disincentives to those who are coming from outside. My only point here is, as far as the cost of training is concerned, this. Will the Government think of giving any incentives to the Indian aviation so that more pilots who are unemployed are shifted from the co-pilot's seat to the commander's seat? How much incentives can the Government give for training the pilots, whether it is Air India or the private airlines, so that we can have more commanders in time and the unemployment of these 4,000 pilots which is becoming a matter of concern today is taken care of?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL : Sir, in a lighter vein, first, Mr. Rudy has taken away the job of one aspiring pilot. He should have chosen to fly at this age, at least . Or, he should have, at least, vacated his seat so that one more person gets a chance to come here.

SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA : What do you mean by "at this age"?

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL : "At this age" means a young pilot. Anyway, Sir, I do understand the sentiments which Mr. Rudy has expressed. It is a fact that there are many young pilots who have no jobs at the moment, and I do experience it from the number of requests which we keep receiving on a daily basis. They are well-trained and qualified and not getting jobs. I assure the House that things are getting better in the aviation sector not only in India but also worldwide. In between we had a very bad phase in 2008-09. That is the reason. Mr. Rudy will appreciate it more than the others that there has been a slow down. That has been the reason why suddenly the number of pilots who have been enrolled by the airlines has come down. Unfortunately, again, the incidents of the last few days are not very encouraging because of the loss the airlines will face. But, notwithstanding that, as far as giving incentives is concerned, it is an actively. It is in personal capacity people choose to become pilots. If you look at it, in our country, in an equitable way I don't think anybody is going to subsidise or the Government, at this moment, is in a mood to subsidise a few thousand students for their future career. But, at the same time, the growth of the sector will, I am sure, ensure that more and more students get absorbed in the Airlines.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question Hour is over.
