

(d) if so, the reasons for allowing 26 per cent FDI to foreign airlines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL):

(a) to (d) The proposal to allow foreign airlines to invest in domestic airline is being examined.

Better infrastructure for air services in Himachal Pradesh

†885. SHRIMATI BIMLA KASHYAP SOOD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that Shimla, Kullu, Kangra and Dharamshala districts in Himachal Pradesh, where lakhs of foreign tourists visit every year, have tremendous tourism potential;

(b) whether the airports in these places are equipped with the infrastructure for landing of only small aircrafts, having no night landing facility, thus affecting the tourism there;

(c) whether the lack of adequate air services and relatively higher air fare are also affecting the tourism there;

(d) if so, whether Government proposes to extend air strips, make available night landing facilities and provide better air services in the State; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Airports at Shimla, Kullu and Kangra are Visual Flight Rules (VFR) airports, to be used in fair weather conditions. However, Aeronautical Ground Lighting facilities have been provided at these airports for smooth operation.

(c) Government had laid down route dispersal guidelines with a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services taking into account the need for air transport services of different regions of the country including North-East region. It is, however, upto the airlines to provide air services to specific places including airports in Himachal Pradesh depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability.

Airfares are not being regulated by the Government. Airlines are free to charge airfares as per market forces. Over the past few years airfares have varied in line with demand and market dynamics.

(d) and (e) Airports Authority of India (AAI) has plans for runway extension to the extent feasible at Shimla, Kullu and Kangra airports in Himachal Pradesh. However, night operation to Kullu, Kangra and Shimla airports are technically not feasible due to the difficult terrain.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.