(b) if so, by when the work of these airstrips is likely to be completed;

(c) by when the air services are proposed to be started regularly on these airstrips;

(d) if not, whether the Ministry does not treat the air services a necessity for the people there;

(e) whether it has not been possible to start the air services in these areas just on account of the pressure exerted by other countries; and

(f) if not, the details of the problems being faced in starting the air services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI K. C. VENUGOPAL): (a) and (b) Extension of the existing apron at Pant Nagar airport was completed by Airports Authority of India (AAI) in May, 2013, and this extended apron can accommodate 2 ATR-72 type of aircraft. Naini-Saini airstrip belongs to the State Government of Uttarakhand.

(c) Flight operations in domestic sector have been deregulated and the airlines are free to operate anywhere in the country subject to compliance of Route Dispersal Guidelines issued by the government. However, it is up to the airline operators to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability.

(d) to (f) Do not arise.

Development of regional airlines

1865. SHRI DHIRAJ PRASAD SAHU: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has plans to develop regional airlines connecting small cities in the country;

(b) whether there is good traffic potential for such regional airlines in connecting major industrial centres in Eastern India, especially Jharkhand; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by Government to start operation of regional airlines in the Eastern Region, especially Jharkhand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI K. C. VENUGOPAL): (a) Operations in domestic sector have been deregulated and flights are being operated by airlines concerned on the basis of commercial viability subject to adherence of Route Dispersal Guidelines. Government has 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, up to the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability while complying with Route Dispersal Guidelines.

(b) No such assessment has been made by the Ministry.

(c) With a view to promote air connectivity within a region, expand air travel services for Tier II and Tier III (small cities) cities and between specific regions, Government has introduced a separate category of Scheduled Air Transport (Regional) Services in 2007. Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued Civil Aviation Requirements for Scheduled regional air transport service. Ministry of Civil Aviation has granted initial NOC to M/s North East Shuttles to operate Regional Services in North Eastern region.

Jet-Etihad deal

1866. SHRI SALIM ANSARI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Prime Minister Office (PMO) have received some representations raising some vague and unsubstantiated allegations in order to stall the Jet-Etihad deal;

(b) whether it is also a fact that PMO office on 2 July, 2013 came out with a statement rebutting these allegations; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons that such a mega deal in FDI in aviation sector is being tried to be scuttled on the basis of such representations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI K. C. VENUGOPAL): (a) Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has received representation from MPs on the Jet-Etihad deal.

(b) On media reports that inferred that PMO is playing a role in Jet-Etihad, PMO had issued a Press release on 02.07.2013 about bilateral air services