

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) Presently, there are 24 international airports in the country including Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Chennai, Guwahati, Kolkata, Jaipur, Kozhikode, Thiruvananthapuram, Goa (Civil Enclave), Port Blair (Civil Enclave), Srinagar (Civil Enclave), Delhi, Mumbai, Nagpur, Lucknow, Varanasi, Tiruchirappalli, Mangalore, Coimbatore, Bhubaneswar, Imphal, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Cochin. Development and upgradation of domestic airports to international standards depends upon various factors including traffic potential, demand from airlines for operation of international flights as well as availability of requisite facilities like adequate runway length to cater to medium capacity long-range aircraft or equivalent type of aircraft, scope for extension of runway as per future requirements, availability of Ground lighting facilities and Instrument Landing System for operation of aircrafts at night, commercial viability etc.

(b) The details of proposals received and approved for upgradation during the last three years and the current year, State/UT-wise are being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

#### **Hiring of foreign pilots for Air India**

2573. SHRIMATI SASIKALA PUSHPA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is shortage of pilots in Air India, if so, the details of actual strength and the reasons for such a shortage;

(b) whether Government is planning to hire foreign pilots to tide over the shortage, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) Yes, Sir. There is a shortage of approx. 180 trained Pilots due to resignation/ attrition in the recent past and ensuing Fleet Augmentation.

(b) No, Sir. At present there is no plan to hire foreign Pilots in Air India.

(c) Air India has taken steps to recruit more Pilots. A recruitment exercise has been carried out for filling up of 197 posts of Pilots and a total of 78 candidates have been appointed as Sr. Trainee Pilot on Fixed Terms Contract for a period of 5 years.

#### **Increase in air passenger traffic**

2574. SHRI PANKAJ BORA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that air passenger traffic is expected to be more than double, over coming five years;