

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am sorry. I can allow only three questions.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: You are not allowing me because I do not shout. I am a sick person...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Subbaramiji, you cannot agitate on this subject.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: No, Sir. I have to put my question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am sorry, I can't violate the 'three supplementaries rule'.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir,...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am sorry. You can put another question at another time, but not at this moment.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: I have been here for the last 15 years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no; I am not denying your 15 years.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: I have never been denied. It has never happened in the history. Nobody let me down very badly. I made a request to you, and see how I am not given an opportunity! I am very upset.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Question No. 49.

Acquisition of land for expansion of Thoothukudi Airport

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

(a) whether Government has taken any concrete steps to acquire 586 acres of land which is required for widening and extending the runway of Thoothukudi Airport in Tamil Nadu; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI JAYANT SINHA): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Thoothukudi (Tuticorin) Airport is an operational airport. For further upgradation of the airport, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has projected a requirement of 586 acres of land to the State Government of Tamil Nadu. Taking steps for the acquisition of land is in the domain of the State Government. The Government of Tamil Nadu has already issued a Government Order for acquisition of land.

SHRIMATI SASIKALA PUSHPA: Sir, the Heathrow Airport of UK, which handles 1,500 flights, departing and landing each day, has about one flight for every 45 seconds. Whereas in India, Thoothukudi, a strategically important city, commercially connected with the international port, has only one flight per day. People are suffering a lot. This is only because of slow process of land acquisition by the Government. I wish to ask the Minister, through you, Sir, whether they have any fixed time-frame for the land acquisition project.

SHRI JAYANT SINHA: First, I would like to reassure the hon. Member that our airports are second to none in terms of their efficiency of operation. The hon. Member has quoted the case of the airport in the United Kingdom that has very high movements per hour. I would like to inform her that the second most efficient airport in the world is widely considered to be Mumbai airport which has almost as many departures and landings as the airport that she is quoting. So, our airports are performing very efficiently and, in fact, the entire exercise of expanding our airport capacity, which absolutely needs to be done, given the stellar growth that we have had in the aviation sector, is proceeding at a pace, Sir, and with respect to the Tuticorin Airport, a request had been made to the State Government many years ago to provide an additional land. In fact, we had requested for 586 acres so that we can expand the runway and land jets as well there. That request has been pending with the State Government for a number of years. We have recently been informed by the State Government that by September, 2017, the entire land acquisition for Tuticorin Airport will be done and then we will be able to land narrow-body aircraft.

SHRIMATI SASIKALA PUSHPA: Sir, my second question is this. The hon. Minister himself has given in this reply that the Government of Tamil Nadu has already issued a Government Order for acquisition of land. My humble point of request is whether the Government has any plan or proposal to opt for this land. Have you fixed any Special Purpose Vehicle for this work to be completed?

SHRI JAYANT SINHA: Sir, the standard procedure by which land is taken over from the State Government is through the Airports Authority Act. Once land is acquired under this Act, it will be under the supervision and ownership of the AAI. Then, of course, the necessary investments are made so that airport is brought to the level of functionality that is required.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Kalita. This is a question on a specific airport.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA: Sir, although the question is specific about Tamil Nadu,...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You stick to the question.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA: Definitely, Sir. I want to restrict myself to the acquisition and expansion part of airport.

Sir, I seek indulgence of hon. Minister, because he himself has seen the situation in some of the other smaller airports like Guwahati where airport was built for hardly twenty flights. But, now, there are more than ninety flights landing every day. It is totally crowded. A number of times this issue has been raised by our hon. Members in this House. But, nothing has been done till now. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has some proposal to expand this airport so that it can cater to the needs of the people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This can be entertained only if the question is on other airports. You cannot ask about Guwahati airport, because that is not the question. Anyway, I leave it to the Minister.

SHRI JAYANT SINHA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to, on behalf of the Ministry — hon. Cabinet Minister is sitting here — reassure all hon. Members that we are very cognizant of various constraints, crowding and congestion that many of our airports are facing. We have very substantial expansion plans for all our airports. Sufficient funds are available and we are tackling all these issues with due haste.

SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI: Sir, Thoothukudi airport expansion proposal was submitted when Mr. Praful Patel was Minister of Civil Aviation and landing of flight started since then. Since then we have been pursuing this matter. The DMK Government had also requested him to consider it, but nothing has happened till today. Even night landing facility has not been provided. So, will the hon. Minister assure this House as to when this project would be completed? And, I request that, at least, night landing facility be provided in this airport, because there is only one flight which lands here and that too during day time.

SHRI JAYANT SINHA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, obviously, former Civil Aviation Minister is informing hon. Member. In fact, request from the Ministry was initiated in 2004 and the first reply from the State Government was in 2010. Subsequently, we have been diligently pursuing this matter and, as I informed the House earlier, we are given to understand that by September, 2017, the entire land acquisition process will be complete and then the airport will be upgraded to whichever standard is required given the requirements posed by various airlines that are operating there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Husain Dalwai. You have to ask on this question.

SHRI HUSAIN DALWAI: Sir, actually...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. You cannot go beyond the question.

श्री हुसैन दलवाई: सर, मेरा कहना है, आपने अभी मुम्बई के बारे में जिक्र किया था।
...(व्यवधान)...

श्री सभापति: नहीं, यहां मुम्बई के बारे में डिस्कस नहीं किया जा रहा है।

श्री हुसैन दलवाई: सर, मिनिस्टर साहब ने अभी मुम्बई का जिक्र किया था, इसलिए मैं उनसे उसके बारे में जानना चाहता हूं। मुम्बई एयरपोर्ट में एक ही रनवे है, जिसके कारण बहुत प्रॉब्लम होती है। मैं मंत्री जी से पूछना चाहता हूं कि वहां पनवेल में बनाए जाने वाले एयरपोर्ट के बारे में क्या हो रहा है? क्या इस पर आगे काम हो रहा है या नहीं हो रहा है?

श्री जयंत सिन्हा: माननीय सभापति जी, मैंने पहले ही इस बात का जिक्र किया था कि हमारे देश में जितने भी एयरपोर्ट्स हैं, जहां-जहां भी आज के समय में congestion या crowding है, उन सभी एयरपोर्ट्स पर हमारा अध्ययन चल रहा है और हम ऐसे सभी एयरपोर्ट्स पर ध्यान दे रहे हैं। जहां-जहां विस्तार करने की जरूरत है, वहां-वहां पर हम लोग विस्तार कर रहे हैं।

***50. [The questioner was absent.]**

Withdrawal of charges on digital payments

***50. SHRI SANJAY RAUT:** Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering any proposal to withdraw the surcharge/service charge or convenience fee on digital payments like credit/debit cards etc. to reduce cash transactions; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) *Vide* Office Memoranda 1(1)/2006/ECS/TA/669 and 670, dated 14th and 15th December, 2016 respectively, Government has decided to absorb the merchant discount rate cost for payments up to ₹ 1 lakh of Government dues, made through debit cards.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 50. Questionnaire is not present. Let the answer be given. Are there any supplementaries? Okay, Shri Rapolu.

SHRI ANANDA BHASKAR RAPOLU: Respected Chairman, Sir, the fancy of the present Government to demonetize and its subsequent revolutionary phase of withdrawal of charges on digital payment has attracted the poorer and weaker sections of the nation that it is going to be the truth that there will not be any charge through Paytm, Mobilink, etc. Now, we are hearing about GoEmerchant.