

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Friday, 8th August, 1952

The House met at Nine of the
Clock.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

9-32 A.M.

STATEMENT RE RECRUITMENT
OF GURKHA SOLDIERS IN BRITISH
ARMY

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): A number of questions have been put—some short notice—in re-been put—some short notice—in re-soldiers in the British Army. Instead of dealing with these questions separately, it might be desirable for me to make a full statement.

During the debate in the House on the 12th of June, 1952, on the Demands under the Ministry of External Affairs, an hon. Member stated that we had given the British special facilities to recruit Gurkha soldiers on our land. I then said: "That is not true. Nepal is an independent country and they can come to any agreement with any country. We do not come into the picture at all". I greatly regret that the answer I gave then was not correct. It is true that no Gurkhas who are Indian nationals are permitted to be recruited by any other country. But it is also true that, as a result of an agreement between the Government of India, of the U.K. and of Nepal, certain facilities were given to the U.K. Government for the recruitment of Nepali nationals on Indian soil near the Nepal border. I was not aware of certain subsequent developments at the time I spoke in the House. I have now made an enquiry and I place the results of this enquiry before the House.

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At the beginning of May 1947, a meeting was held at Kathmandu between representatives of the Government of India, of the U.K., and of Nepal. It was made clear at this meeting that no Indian Nationals, Gurkhas or others, could be recruited by any other country. At that time, there were a large number of Gurkhas in the Indian Army. The numbers had gone up in war time above the normal figure and the question was of the disbandment of some of these regiments. The Nepal Government expressed their willingness to maintain connections with both Armies, namely, the Indian Army and the British Army, provided men of the Gurkha regiments were willing so to serve and the terms and conditions do not prove detrimental to the interests or dignity of the Nepalese Government. It was further stated on behalf of the Government of Nepal that the total number of Gurkha units to be employed by the Government of India and the Government of the United Kingdom should be limited and brought down to the peace time strength of twenty battalions, out of which eight battalions would be allotted to the British Army.

The Government of India informed the Government of Nepal that the reduction of the Gurkha regiments in the Indian Army would be carried out gradually.

As an independent country, the Nepal Government were free to permit the Government of the U.K. to employ Gurkha troops, that is, their nationals. We had nothing to do with this arrangement except in so far as transit facilities were required for these Gurkhas to go across India. It was agreed that these transit facilities will be given provided the Gurkhas went in mufti and as individuals. Certain postal and like facilities were also agreed to. It was also agreed that the recruitment of Gurkhas in Nepal should not in any way interfere with the recruitment to the Gurkha units in the Indian Army.

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

A tripartite agreement was arrived at. This assigned eight Gurkha battalions in the then Indian Army to the U.K. and provided for the personnel of these battalions to be questioned individually whether they desired to transfer their service to the U.K. Government. Those who did not so desire, remained in the Indian Army.

It was also agreed that "for the present" the U. K. Government might continue to use the existing recruiting depots at Gorakhpur and Ghum near Darjeeling. It was felt that this would be more convenient for all parties concerned, as a temporary measure, than if new depots for recruitment were opened, either in Nepal territory or elsewhere. It was then the intention of the U.K. Government to establish recruiting depots in Nepal.

In a statement made by me in Parliament on the 10th of December 1947, I said as follows:

"In connection with the employment of Gurkhas by HMG, the Government of India have agreed to grant HMG certain necessary facilities, such as, the use, as a temporary measure, of the existing depots at Gorakhpur and Ghum and the provision on mutually satisfactory terms of transit facilities, postal and telegraphic facilities, special food stuffs, Indian currency and remittance facilities".

In pursuance of this arrangement, the U. K. Government were allowed, as a temporary measure, to use the existing recruiting depots of the Indian Army at Gorakhpur and Ghum (Darjeeling). Later, in March 1948 a separate depot was established at Jalapahar near Darjeeling and in February 1950 another depot was established at Lehra in Gorakhpur. The latter depot has been leased out to the U.K. Government for a period of ten years.

At both these recruiting depots, the Gurkha recruits are medically examined and formally enrolled. No training is given at these places.

Facilities to use recruiting depots in India were originally asked for and granted by us as a purely temporary measure. These have continued for some years in order to meet the wishes of the Nepal Government in this matter.

As this matter concerns two other Governments, namely, the Govern-

ment of Nepal and the Government of the United Kingdom, it will be taken up with these Governments.

An Hon. Member: May I ask one question?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: No questions are allowed on statements made by Members of the Government. This has reference to rule 286 which says that a statement may be made by a Minister on a particular matter and no questions shall be asked at the time the statement is made.

Shri Nambiar (Mayuram): Can a clarification be sought?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That means asking a question.

MESSAGES FROM THE COUNCIL OF STATES

Secretary: Sir, I have to report the following two messages received from the Secretary of the Council of States:

(i) "In accordance with the provisions of rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, I am directed to inform the House of the People that the Council of States, at its sitting held on the 6th August, 1952, agreed without any amendment to the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers Bill, 1952, which was passed by the House of the People at its sitting held on the 31st July, 1952."

(ii) "In accordance with the provisions of rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, I am directed to inform the House of the People that the Council of States, at its sitting held on the 7th August, 1952, agreed without any amendment to the Commissions of Inquiry Bill, 1952, which was passed by the House of the People at its sitting held on the 29th July, 1952."

Shri S. S. More (Sholapur): May I ask the hon. the Leader of the House the exact date by which we shall be in a position to disperse, because many of the Members have to make their arrangements for going home?

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I cannot give a precise and definite date, but I earnestly hope that we may be able to finish by the 12th evening. The 13th in any event is a