

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: As I pointed out, "how many miles of road have been constructed upto October"—that is the question. It does not involve the question whether there is a proposal to construct a new road.

Shri Jasani: Can we have the State-wise mileage of roads?

Shri Alagesan: All that is supplied in the statement.

Shrimati Tarkeshwari Sinha: Once these roads are constructed, who bears the cost of maintenance—is it the State Government or the Central Government?

Shri Alagesan: The scheme is this. As far as National Highways in Part A and Part B States are concerned we are fully maintaining them and we are bearing the capital cost also. All roads in Part C and Part D States we are maintaining.

ESPLANADE MANSIONS AT CALCUTTA

*1096. **Shri Krishna Chandra:** Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) whether a sum of over one lakh of rupees was spent by the Railway Administration on rent and maintenance of Watch and Ward staff on a portion of the Esplanade Mansions at Calcutta hired for Public Relations and Publicity Offices during the year 1948-49;

(b) whether it is a fact that the building remained vacant for three years and the expenditure on rent and Watch and Ward staff continued to be incurred all along; and

(c) who has been responsible for this loss?

The Deputy Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Alagesan): (a) No. The sum spent as rental and for the maintenance of the Watch and Ward staff during 1948-49 was Rs. 24,900.

(b) Yes. It remained vacant for nearly three years.

(c) The premises required extensive structural alterations and repairs before it could be made suitable for use for the office of Public Relations and Publicity work. The finalisation of estimates for the work and tenders took some time. Thereafter, progress of construction was slow due to scarcity of skilled labour on account of the Great Calcutta Killing of 1946 and the series of subsequent disturbances in Calcutta. The partition of the Bengal-Assam Railway then headquartered at Calcutta was another factor

which delayed the matter. The question of individual responsibility does not, therefore, arise.

Shri Krishna Chandra: May I know whether the Public Accounts Committee have made any observation on this matter?

Shri Alagesan: I am not able to say at present, Sir.

Shri Krishna Chandra: Is it a fact that the Public Accounts Committee have expressed their strong disapprobation on this affair and have advised the Railway Administration that they should adopt some procedure by which this carelessness may be avoided?

Shri Alagesan: May be so.

Shri K. K. Basu: May I know whether there is not enough accommodation in the Railway buildings themselves to accommodate this office?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We are on a particular building why it is vacant? It may be used for that or another office. Why has it been vacant so long—that is the question.

Shri K. K. Basu: This Esplanade Mansions is a rented house. I want to know whether Government can shift to its own railway buildings. There were two head offices in Calcutta formerly.

Shri Alagesan: In fact the Railways then headquartered at Calcutta wanted to have a joint office for their public Relations and Publicity work and hence this building was taken over.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member wants to know if there is no alternative accommodation available and if it is necessary to pay so much rent?

Shri Alagesan: I am unable to answer the question, Sir.

Shri Krishna Chandra: Have the observations made by the Public Accounts Committee not been brought to the notice of the Department concerned?

Shri Alagesan: I did not say it was not brought to the notice of the Government. I said at present I have not got the information in my possession.

INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

*1097. **Shri Mohana Rao:** (a) Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state whether a meeting was recently held of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research?