

LOK SABHA DEBATES
(Part I—Questions and Answers)

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LOK SABHA

Tuesday, 13th December 1955

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Post Office Savings Bank Accounts
(Pakistan)

*752. **Sardar Hukam Singh:** Will the Minister of **Communications** be pleased to state:

(a) whether any progress has been made in the work of the liaison officers appointed in Pakistan in pursuance of Indo-Pakistan agreement of July-August, 1954; and

(b) when transfer of Post Office Savings Bank Accounts and Certificates of displaced persons from Pakistan to India is expected to be completed?

The Deputy Minister of Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) Yes.

(b) According to the recent Indo-Pakistan agreement, the transfer of Post Office Savings Bank accounts and certificates, claims whereof for transfer from Pakistan to India and *vice versa* were registered by the prescribed dates should be completed by the 30-6-56.

Sardar Hukam Singh: May I know whether any assessment has been made so far as to what is the total amount of our accounts there?

Shri Raj Bahadur: According to the initial assessment the number of claims for S. B. Accounts and Postal Certificates was 1,45,275 estimated to be valued at Rs. 7,22,05,232. Out of this, the unsettled claims were assessed at 56,682 of the value of Rs. 3,00,73,096.

Sardar Hukam Singh: And what is the amount claimed by Pakistan from 18?

Shri Raj Bahadur: It is only the Pakistan authorities to whom it is best known as to how much amount can be claimed by them. But from the information available

with us it can be said that the total amount claimed by Pakistan on account of these accounts is of the order of Rs. 16 lakhs.

Sardar Hukam Singh: What is the amount we have given so far, if any, to the people in need of relief urgently, as these accounts have not been transferred?

Shri Raj Bahadur: The amount for which Post Office Savings Bank accounts and Certificates were transferred from India to Pakistan upto 7th November 1955 is Rs. 9,46,268.

Sardar Hukam Singh: I wanted to know whether we have given any interim relief to any of the claimants who are in urgent need of money.

Shri Raj Bahadur: On the question on interim relief I cannot say off-hand and I do not know whether it arises from the question. Here we are concerned with the transfer of particular Savings Bank account or postal Certificates. I do not know how it comes.

Sardar Hukam Singh: May I know whether we have made any attempts to adjust the mutual claims and whether there has been any correspondence on that subject or whether any discussions have taken place between the two countries to see whether the claims can be mutually adjusted and paid from those places?

Shri Raj Bahadur: I do not know what exactly is meant by mutual adjustment. Some people on our side had Savings Bank accounts in the post offices of Pakistan. They want them to be transferred to India. Some people in Pakistan had their accounts in our post offices. They want them to be transferred to Pakistan. The question of mutual adjustment hardly arises.

Sardar Hukam Singh: I am referring only to those who have had their accounts in Pakistan but now want them to be transferred here and who are in need of payment immediately but they are not getting it because the accounts are not being transferred. Is there any method by which they can be paid here before actual transfer of those accounts?

Shri Raj Bahadur: Before actual transfer? It has to be verified whether a particular Savings Bank account actually

existed in Pakistan. It has also to be verified as to what was the account at the disposal or to the credit of the particular account holder. Without that verification which comes only from Pakistan, it does not appear to be possible to effect any interim adjustment.

Shri Gidwani: May I know whether we have any complete accounts as regards those who have gone to Pakistan and whether we can unilaterally take any action and settle the accounts here?

Shri Raj Bahadur: I do not think it can be taken unilaterally, because the mutual adjustment of account between two countries is involved in these things.

Mr. Speaker: As I understood from the questions put by hon. Members the trend of the question, I think, is that people keep their moneys in Post Office Savings Bank accounts with a view to be able to make use of those moneys in times of need. A large number of years have passed, and nothing is settled. What is the remedy which Government propose now in respect of the moneys that people have paid there, to give them interim relief here? Pakistan may perhaps never verify them till doomsday. Are we going to wait? That seems to be the point of the question.

Shri Raj Bahadur: Sir, I am very grateful to you for the elucidation of the question because it explains to me the whole import of the question. I think I will do well to explain, if I can in a few words, the history of the efforts made by the Government of India in this matter. There were some conferences in the middle of September, 1949; some procedure was evolved; it could not be implemented. In June, 1950 another conference was held; another procedure was evolved and some formulae were also evolved, and again in 1952 August there was another conference. Those procedures and formulae for transfer of accounts also could not be implemented. Then we met in July-August, 1953 and we first of all decided to appoint what are known as liaison officers to push on the work of verification of account in either country. Our liaison officers are posted at Karachi and Lahore, and their liaison officers are posted at Delhi and Ambala. The verified lists of these accounts are exchanged at their instance and they help us in that direction. That has been done. Then again, as late as March, 1955, we again found that the work was going slow. There, as is supposed to be that the Pakistan authorities think that the value of our accounts to be transferred to us is only two and a half times the value of the amount that India owes to Pakistan in respect of these accounts. As against this the ratio should be as between Rs. 3 crores and Rs. 16 lakhs. So they are only verifying lists two and a half times in number. That has been the snag. Now final dates have been given, and for the verification of accounts which shall have to

be settled and completed by the end of June, 1956. That is how the matter stands at the moment.

Sardar Hukam Singh: If that is not also finalised?

Mr. Speaker: It is not for the Chair to make any recommendations or to put any questions. To me the question seems to be obvious. Government have made all possible attempts. That is true. Government have also an estimate as to the amount in the accounts in Pakistan, about Rs. 9 crores and so on. Now, assuming that nothing can be done by negotiations with Pakistan, what is the Government doing for the purpose of giving some kind of interim payment or relief to those who badly need money here? The verification may take years. All I would suggest is that Government may consider this aspect and then come before the House with some proposals.

The Minister of Communications (Shri Jagjivan Ram): Sir, may I add a word? What you have said just now was under my consideration also. But the difficulty is that unless the accounts are verified we cannot take the claims to be the correct thing. That is technically speaking; but in actual practice, as you say, the people are put to much difficulty and hardship, and especially in the case of refugees the difficulty increases much more. As a matter of fact, I receive many personal representations from widows or helpless people. The only source to fall back upon for them is the deposit which they have in the Savings Banks. So, as a matter of fact, as you have suggested, something on those lines is under my consideration, whether we can make of a certain percentage of their balance as payment before the settlement of their claims after the verification of the same in Pakistan. I will pursue that matter.

Overseas Communications

*753. **Shri Shree Narayan Das:** Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any plan for the expansion and development of overseas communications has been drawn;
- (b) if so, what are the important features of such a plan;
- (c) whether there is any proposal to have teleprinter facilities for business houses and news transmission circuits for press agencies; and
- (d) what is the estimated expenditure on such expansion and development?