

Board while submitting proposals for revision of pay scale in accordance with Government's decisions on the recommendations of the Pay Commission, had suggested the upgradation of certain posts to make them on par with comparable posts in Government departments and other Statutory Bodies. Since the two questions, namely, revision of pay scales and upgradation of certain posts to remove disparities, have to be dealt with separately, the Rubber Board has been asked to put up first proposals for revision of pay scales in accordance with the recommendations of the Pay Commission immediately. The question of removal of disparities where they exist will be taken up after the revision of pay scales is completed.

12 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: TALKS WITH
SANT FATEH SINGH

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Mr. Speaker, Sir, a few days ago, I placed on the Table of the House copies of correspondence which had passed between me and Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh. This correspondence began with a letter which I had addressed to Master Tara Singh on August 10, 1961 appealing to him to give up the idea of a fast which he had previously announced and which was to begin on the 15th August. The copies of the letters that I placed on the Table of the House ended with a letter from me dated August 23 addressed to Shri Fateh Singhji.

On that very day, namely August 23, Sant Fateh Singh came to Delhi and met me in the evening. We also met on the 24th and 25th August. Sant Fateh Singh was accompanied during these talks by Sardar Gurnam Singh. These talks were frank and friendly, but they did not lead to any agreement. Sant Fateh Singh thereafter, on the evening of the 25th August, returned to Amritsar.

Meanwhile, the fast which Master Tara Singh had commenced on the 15th August continued and is still continuing. Other fasts were started in opposition to Master Tara Singh's fast by Swami Rameshwaranand in Delhi and Shri Surya Dev in Amritsar.

Government have been much concerned about these fasts and have made repeated requests for their discontinuance. But all the efforts of Government has thus far not succeeded in this matter.

In the course of my long talks with Sant Fateh Singh and Sardar Gurnam Singh, stress was laid by them on what has been referred to as a Punjabi Suba, that is, a partition of the state of the Punjab as it is today so as to separate the purely Punjabi-speaking area which should be made into a new separate State. I was unable to agree to this proposal because it seemed to me harmful both in principle and in its application. Further, any such demand based on the coercion exercised by a fast appeared to be an undesirable and harmful method opposed to the normal concepts of democracy and parliamentary procedure. Such a method would ultimately lead to a weakening of the democratic procedures in the country and would lead to other grave and difficult problems.

On the merits of the proposed Punjabi Suba, I pointed out that in so far as the question of language was concerned, and more particularly the advancement of the Punjabi language, there should be no dispute or argument now. A great deal had been done to further the Punjabi language both in education and in administration up to a certain level. And, as opportunities arose, more could be done. In fact, a settlement arrived at some years ago to divide the Punjab into two regions, namely the Punjabi region and the Hindi region, had already resulted in full protection being given to the Punjabi language.

Soon after the settlement based on the regional formula was arrived at, there was some delay in giving effect to it because it involved the training of many thousands of teachers in the Punjabi language so that they could undertake education in the elementary stages in Punjabi. These teachers were called upon to learn both Hindi and Punjabi. As this training proceeded, a change-over took place in the medium of instruction in these regions. In addition to the proposals made in the regional formula for the advancement of Punjabi, other steps have also been taken with that end in view. It has also been decided to start a University for the Punjabi language.

Thus, in so far as the Punjabi language is concerned, everything that has been asked for has been conceded and full opportunities have been provided for the growth of that language. The question, therefore, of demanding a Punjabi Suba in order to give facilities to the Punjabi language does not arise. The demand for a Punjabi Suba thus can only be considered as a communal demand, even though it is given a linguistic base. It seemed to us that the acceptance of the proposal which basically was communal would be wrong in regard to the formation of a State.

Apart from this, any division of the Punjab as it is would be very harmful to all the people there and come in the way of the progress of the Punjab. The Punjab, as is well known, is one of the most prosperous of Indian States, and the per capita income of the people there is the highest in India, it is an economic unit, and to break this up would necessarily injure its developing economy and progress. At any time this would be undesirable. At the present moment, when the Third Five Year Plan has just begun, it would be a blow to the State from which it would take many years to recover.

A state formed on the basis of the proposed Punjabi Suba would be one

of the smallest in India and it is by no means sure that it would be easily viable.

The Punjab as a province was formed over a hundred years ago. It suffered greatly from its partition at the time of India attaining independence. It has, by the courage and hard work of its people, succeeded in largely overcoming the disabilities imposed by the Partition. Another partition now would cause it deep injury.

Apart from the economic aspect, the Punjab, as it has grown, has formed a definite social and linguistic unit. The dominant language of the whole State has been and is Punjabi though in certain parts of it Hindi is the mother tongue. It has developed a certain linguistic and social culture which is peculiar to the Punjab and which distinguishes Punjabis, whether they are Hindus or Sikhs or from whatever part of the State they may come. In effect, it is a Punjabi-speaking State with certain areas where Hindi is the language of minority groups. Hindi is, of course, as laid down in the Constitution, also the all-India language for official purposes. Most people in the Punjab understand both Hindi and Punjabi. There are innumerable families in the Punjab some of whose members are Sikh and some Hindu. In fact, except for fairly recent communal developments, the Punjab has been a more integrated State than almost any other State in India. To split it up and break this integration would be a tragedy, both from the social and the economic points of view. Linguistically, Punjabi would suffer. The Sikhs specially would be sufferers because their wide outlook, which has taken them to all parts of India where they have made good and succeeded in their activities, may, to some extent, be replaced by a narrower outlook.

For all these and many other reasons, I pleaded with Sant Fateh Singh, and previously with Master

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

Tara Singh, that their proposal to partition the Punjab again was harmful for the country, for the Punjab and more especially for the Sikhs.

If, however, anything further had to be done in regard to the advancement of Punjabi, we were perfectly prepared to consider it. As far as I could see, nothing further could be done from the linguistic point of view for the furtherance of Punjabi, which could not be done in existing circumstances.

If the regional formula was not wholly satisfactory, this matter could be examined fully so as to make its working smoother and more effective. If it was thought necessary, some additional powers could be given to the regional committees.

It was suggested by Sant Fateh Singh that the regional committees should be given powers of legislation and converted into some kind of sub-legislatures. I was unable to agree to this as it was not only not in keeping with our Constitution but would produce an extraordinary state of affairs in the Punjab with three legislatures functioning there.

It was stated that the regional formula had not worked and was practically dead. On enquiry I found that this was satisfactorily and, in fact, almost all its recommendations had been accepted by the Punjab Assembly. But I made it clear that I was fully prepared to have this matter examined by representatives of the regions and the Punjab Government so that its working could be improved.

It had been repeatedly said that there was discrimination against the Sikhs, though instances of this had not been pointed out. I suggested, however, that if there was any such apprehension, a high level enquiry could be made into this matter to find out if there had been any such discrimination.

To my deep regret, the proposals I made were not acceptable to Sant Fateh Singh, and he insisted on the Punjabi Suba or, in the alternative, of the regions having special legislatures of their own. I could not accept either of these for the reasons I have stated already. I pleaded with Sant Fateh Singh to induce Master Tara Singh to give up his fast, because whatever the result of it, this could do no good and it was a wrong method. Wrong means could not lead to right results. I pointed out to him that the future of the Punjab would be dark if there was conflict and tension between the Hindus and the Sikhs of the Punjab. It was only on the basis of mutual goodwill and co-operation that the Punjab could make the progress which was its due and for which it was so eminently fitted. Any further partition would inevitably create a great deal of illwill and conflict. It may even break up many families. In search of something which seemed to me trivial and even harmful, we would lose the precious heritage which is common to all Punjabis, whether they are Hindus or Sikhs or Muslims.

I deeply regret my failure to convince Sant Fateh Singh. The unfortunate result is that Master Tara Singh's fast is still continuing, and so, also the fasts of Swami Rameshwaranand and Shri Surya Dev.

The future of the Punjab is important not merely for one group but for every Punjabi and indeed for the whole country. Many people, both Sikhs and Hindus, have tried their utmost to induce Master Tara Singh and others to end their fasts and thus produce a climate when problems can be considered calmly and through democratic processes. Unfortunately they have thus far not succeeded.

The argument that linguistic provinces have been accepted elsewhere but not in the Punjab is not valid.

No State in India is wholly unilingual. The Punjab is more homogenous and integrated than many other States in India. Even from the point of view of language, Punjabi is the dominant language. This does not mean that there are not languages of minority groups as elsewhere. Even if the broad principle of linguistic provinces is accepted, it is impossible and sometimes very harmful to carry it to extreme limits. Indeed this is not possible without breaking up India into numerous small bits. I would even say that the Punjab as it represents linguistically a homogenous area with certainly some linguistic minority groups. Any artificial division would leave large numbers of persons on either side whose sympathies would be for the other side. Thus an element of friction would be created and this would continue and prevent harmonious and co-operative working. To partition the existing State would not only be a break with history and tradition, but would cause deep injury to the economy of the State and the lives of the brave people who live there.

I would again earnestly request Master Tara Singh to give up his fast. The suggestions I have made above about an enquiry into the working of the regional formula holds. So also the enquiry, if considered necessary, into the charge that there has been discrimination.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta—Central): Earlier, it was suggested to you—you had agreed and the Prime Minister had also agreed—that before the Prime Minister leaves the country there should be a discussion on this subject. I say this because—

Mr. Speaker: I have accepted it. We shall have a discussion on this subject tomorrow evening, at 4 o'clock, for a couple of hours. As the time is short, all hon. Members may not be able to take part; therefore, leaders of groups may take part.

1030 (ai) LSD—5.

Ch. Ranbir Singh (Rajtak): There are many hon. Members from Punjab who want to take part. The time may be extended.

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Ferozabad): Three hours may be allotted.

Shri Goray (Poona): Yes; three hours may be given.

Mr. Speaker: If the House is willing to sit, I shall also sit for three hours. It may be 4 to 7.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Let us start it at 3 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: I shall consider it. In view of the statement of the hon. Prime Minister and my decision to have a discussion on it—the hon. Prime Minister himself suggested that we may have a discussion—there is no difference of opinion on this matter. I have also allowed a discussion tomorrow.

Hon. Members who have given notices of Adjournment Motion or Calling Attention Notices may take part in that discussion. I do not propose allowing any of the Adjournment Motions or the Calling Attention Notices on this subject.

Shri Tyagi (Dehra Dun) rose—

Mr. Speaker: Shri Tyagi has tabled a Calling Attention Notice. I shall try to give him an opportunity tomorrow. He can raise this matter also.

Shri Tyagi: I do not want to raise a discussion about it now. It is only a question of pure information. I do want to discuss it. (Interruptions).

Mr. Speaker: No, no.

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): There is already another Calling Attention Notice. You have already directed that except on the last day of the session there cannot be more than one Calling Attention Notice.

Mr. Speaker: Tomorrow, every one of these things will be considered.