

From January, these men were under the cover of the FBI and it was in touch with these people and all the conversation with these people had been video taped. So, they were doing the job. So, let us take it at its face value. What the CIA is doing or not doing, well, it is a matter of speculation, it is a matter of conjecture. Let us take this opportunity for what it is. Let the Prime Minister go and I am sure nothing will happen to him. But I will utter one warning. He is not going only to United States. He is going to France; he going to Egypt : He is going to Algeria.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : He is going to Soviet Union also.

SHRI G. G. SWELL : Soviet Union apart, because these things would not happen there. We know that there is a different system. I think that there is reason also to ensure his safety in France. I do not know about Egypt and Algeria. If harm is to be done, it can be done anywhere in the world and therefore I will request the Minister to look into this also.

MR. SPEAKER : Has Prof. Madhu Dandavate leave of the House to withdraw his amendment ?

HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

The amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. SPEAKER : I shall put the motion moved by Shri Swell to the vote of the House.

The question is :

“That this House takes note of and views with great concern the report of the uncovering of a plot by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation to assassinate the Prime Minister during his impending visit to the United States.”

The motion was adopted.

MESSAGES FROM RAJYA SABHA —Contd.

SECRETARY GENERAL : Sir, I have to report the following message received from the Secretary General of Rajya Sabha :

“In accordance with the provisions of rule III of the Rules of Procedure and

Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, I am directed to enclose a copy of the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 1985, which has been passed by the Rajya Sabha at its sitting held on the 14th May, 1985.”

COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

As Passed by Rajya Sabha

SECRETARY GENERAL : Sir, I lay on the Table of the House the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 1985, as passed by Rajya Sabha.

18.30 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

[English]

Spécial Charger and Return Fare Facility to Cities Outside India

MR. SPEAKER : Now Half-an-Hour Discussion.

SHRI DIGVIJAY SINH (Surendranagar) : Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise a debate on the biggest and the most dynamic industries in the world which is tourism and before I deliberate on the subject, let me thank you for allowing me to raise a debate on this subject. It is because tourism and civil aviation was not given a chance for discussion under the Demands.

Even in India, it is an industry which today has a foreign exchange earning of Rs. 1,030 crores and the tourist arrivals in the year, 1983-84 were somewhere around 8,84,730. Of course, this includes the ethnic tourist arrivals as well and it is an industry which has great future. I need not at this juncture go into the details of what the potential it of tourism arrivals into India are. But let me tell you that this is an industry with this kind of magnitude of foreign earnings. The import content of promoting this industry is only less than 1%. So, it is not foreign exchange earnings against any export as of today. As far as its potentialities of giving direct and indirect employment in various fields whether it is sophisticated industry or whether it is handicrafts is concerned, it is unlimited.

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We all know that. It also helps to develop the under-developed parts of the country, the backward areas of country, for tourism development and, more than that, tourism and civil aviation is an industry which has the finest scope of cementing international relationship between one country and the rest of the world and yet with all these potentialities, let us look at, where India stands today.

The tourist arrivals into India are today much less than the small countries like Korea and Philippines, and other tourist destination countries which have been promoted and developed like Hongkong and Singapore and may be, Thailand, which are almost 2½ times the size of what India as far as tourist arrivals are concerned can generate. Minn you, the reason why it is important to focus attention on this industry today is because in 1984, India's tourism was at its lowest ebb. The reasons were political. But perhaps there have been a more spectacular drop of tourist arrivals than what India saw in 1984 due to about five or six reasons, mainly political.

I would like to make a very specific suggestion. The hon. Prime Minister is very much interested in developing relationship between SARC South Asian Regional Coordination Programme. It is high time that we thought big and propose having an Organisation similar to PATA and SARTA and call it the South Asian Regional Tourism Association. This Association could coordinate between nine countries which include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and even Burma. And if you add SARTA, with India as focal point, obviously it generates more tourism than four times of all the other countries put together. Look at the potentialities we have of competing with ASTA and PATA. What have ASTA and PATA done to India? They have not brought even 0.7 per cent of the total international tourism of the world, although we are paying millions of dollars, by both Government as well as private enterprise for membership in these two organisations.

I would like to focus attention on a clear-cut definition of the tourism policy of the country which, it seems, is a little ambivalent now. I made a suggestion to the hon. Prime Minister and to the hon.

Minister that we should set up a high-powered Tourism Board, not one of these wishy-washy things which exist today, which is supposed to be an Advisory Board, but a Board which has more executive functioning and more authority, and this could do the perspective planning and coordination between various Ministries and Departments both at the Centre and in the States for effective implementation. We have been talking for the last several years that tourism should be placed at par with other priority industries specially those that are export-oriented. But there has been no clear definition or clear guideline as to what is made and what is being implemented. I have a clear picture of what it should be and I would like to put it before the House.

It should be classified as an export-oriented priority industry, so that promotional efforts are geared up. Investment and depreciation allowances under section 32A of the Indian Taxation Act should be given. Benefit under section 80 HHC where 50 per cent of the profits are set aside as a foreign exchange-earner-industry should be offered. Exemption from wealth tax on equity shares of investments—because it is a hotel industry—should be given so that there is more capital investment and, therefore, more potentialities for earning foreign exchange. Exemption from excise duty on sale of goods which earn foreign exchange and waiving of import duty on essential imports for the trade whereby we create more foreign exchange-earning capacity.

Let me come down to the specifics of this question which is concerning charters. We all know that those countries where international tourism has developed phenomenally in the last decade or two have been able to do it because there has been a direct policy of the Government for promoting charters, and charters are methods whereby cheap travel facility is offered. As far as India is concerned, last year only 25 charters operated in this country on point-to-point basis. There were several promoters who had asked for chartering point to point, specially between New York and Bangalore. But it was declined for some reason or the other. The excuse that is always given is that it will decrease the earnings of Air India. Now let me try and tell you this. Perhaps there is nobody in this House who is more concerned about the welfare of Air

India than I am because I am the only ex-employee of Air India in Parliament today. The Air India has done well and we are proud of that. In 1983-84 the company made a profit of Rs. 58 crores; and the Indian Airlines made a profit of Rs. 60 crores. But that should not be an excuse for not allowing these charters and thereby hampering, restricting and restraining your international tourism, the arrivals into India. The excuses that are often given are that it will result in loss of revenue for Air India. And that with a little tab the workers would be encouraged to come back to India on cheap fares and it will promote and give more chances for ethnic visitors to come to India and thereby decreases the profits of Air India and, therefore, point-to-point tourist arrivals should be restrained. I would only say that we should have clear-cut guidelines on charters. My suggestion is : (1) when you allow a charter, allow that charter to operate from any foreign destination to an airport which does not have international airport facilities so that they may not compete directly with Air India. Give it to any other airports in India and not to international airports. (2) For all those who make use of the charter, don't allow an Indian passport-holder to come. You can stipulate this as it does not come in the way of IATA regulations. You can put this restriction and then open up chartering from any foreign destination to any airport outside the international airports which are 8 or 10 in this country. If you liberalise to this extent, this very year, this very winter season you will be able to have one charter a week and a charter plane usually carries 272 passengers. And between 8 to 10 airports in the country we will have one lakh foreign tourists this winter and in the course of five years with the development of this demand it may reach one charter per day to all these 8 to 10 airports. Over a period of 8 months which is the tourist season, it would bring about one million tourists to the country and that would enhance your tourism potential two-fold and bring you much more revenue.

But before that let me also tell you the other facilities which are very important to be given. One is the visa facility. We get complaints that it takes months for a person to get a visa from a visa-issuing authority.

I know security is an important measure, especially in the present situation about which we just now discussed. Security measures are very important. But if we have a system of some sort of computerisation whereby the visa-issuing authorities in the various Consuls and Embassies abroad get the feed-back, visa can be issued immediately. Why should it take two months? Look at the cumbersome procedure.

This year is a great year where seats are being sold for promoting international tourism into India. One is the Festival of India in USA for which the hon. Prime Minister is going to USA next month and followed by the Festival of India in France. Therefore, I think it is imperative that some kind of market research we do and see how best we can promote tourism into our country.

A few suggestions I would like to make for strengthening the department and I thought it would be important to mention them at this juncture. One is issuing of licences for buses, coaches and tourists cars which to-day is in the hands of the Ministry of Transport and there is no linkage between the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Transport. Why should it not be with the Ministry of Tourism—the issuing of licences, specially tourist car licences?

The other thing is : we are talking of hotel development. Why should the IFCI which advances loans for putting up hotels not be with the Ministry of Tourism? Because they know where and who to give these loans. I would also like to say that hotels have, of course, to come but there is a trend of putting up five-star hotels. The need of the hour is to put three-star hotels—good, cheap and at reasonable price. Hotel industry is not coming forth to put up three-star hotels. May be they feel that they will get more profit or more loan if they put up five-star hotels.

I would also like to talk about ITDC because I have been a director or that organisation. ITDC this year with all good intentions has seen a year whereby even the flagship Ashoka has to defray the depreciation and, therefore, I feel very stringent cost controls have to be put not only in Ashoka but in all ITDC lay-outs throughout the country and establishing better coordination

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between Hotel Corporation of India and ITDC. The Hotel Corporation of India is an Air India outlay and is putting up hotels in Srinagar, Rajgir, etc.

I would like to make a few concrete suggestions, viz., better production of Buddhist tourism in India; Krishna tours in India and setting up of an India River Tourism Development Corporation which would promote tourism to the larger rivers and thereby not only develop international tourism but domestic tourism as well.

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT) : Mr. Chairman, Sir. The hon. Member has expressed his views here that there should be rapid development of tourism in the country and he has expressed his anxiety about it. He has also thrown light on the state of development of tourism in the country during the last few years. I am happy to note that he is aware of the reasons for decrease in the number of tourists in 1982-83. He has himself referred to it.

First of all, I would like to say, as the hon. Member has also expressed his desire and we ourselves also want, that tourism should be developed in the various regions of our country. He has thrown light on the importance of tourism. There are no two opinions about it and our Ministry is also working for the development of tourism, keeping in view this point.

He has asked for the setting up of a Tourism Board. I would like to bring it to his notice that the Tourism Board is already in existence and its next meeting is scheduled to be held in June this year. So far as his suggestions for making tourism an export-oriented industry are concerned, we have already taken this matter up with the Ministry of Finance. It is our endeavour that the facilities which are available to industries and especially to the export-oriented industries, may also be available to the persons engaged in the tourism industry. We are continuing our efforts in this direction and we hope that the Ministry of Finance would take an early decision in this regard and as a result of that decision, the people working in this field would be able to get the facilities.

The hon. Member has said that a request had been made for a chartered flight from New York to Bangalore, which was not granted. No such request has been received in our Ministry and we do not have any information about it. If the hon. Member gives some more information about it, I would get further information about it. Till now, we had given permission for chartered flights to four places only, but now we have added Goa and Trivandrum also in this list. It has been our continuous endeavour that companies arranging chartered flights in foreign countries might be given the maximum facilities. In addition we have been continuously relaxing our policy and the guidelines regarding chartered flights so that the tourists visiting our country could get more facilities. These companies were provided facilities to send tourists here in 1984, but you know that the year 1984 has been a very bad year from the point of view of tourism and this is the reason why our figures regarding tourism have gone into minus. But despite that it has been our endeavour, and whenever the Director General or the Secretary or other officers of our Ministry visit foreign countries, they make continuous efforts to have a talk with the chartered operators and to convince them that they would be provided with all the facilities there so that they could bring the tourists here under their chartered programme.

The hon. Member has expressed his views about developing tourism. I would not like to say anything in detail regarding the development of tourism, but I would like to submit this much that we are working in this direction and we are keeping contact with various other Ministries so that in co-ordination of all of them, the maximum facilities could be provided to the tourists coming here.

The hon. Member has given a very good suggestion that instead of five star hotels, the number of three star hotels should be increased. I would like to inform the hon. Member that after hon. Shri Rajiv Gandhi has taken charge of his Ministry, it has been our policy that three star, two star or one star hotels should be given more emphasis. We are also thinking in the direction of building cheaper accommodation for the facility of domestic tourists. We have also asked the I.T.D.C. to formulate their schemes in this direction.

The hon. Member has said that tourists visit Hongkong, Singapore, Thailand and other neighbouring countries through chartered operators. There are no two opinions about it. We are also making efforts to provide similar facilities to the maximum extent here also so that the maximum number of tourists could visit our country. I would also like to submit that it would take a lot of time if I read all the guidelines and relaxations which we have given. I would send them to the hon. Member and he would get all the information. Even then if he would seek any clarification, I am prepared to give it.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : The hon. Minister has explained everything in detail. Nothing remains to be asked now. I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister on his excellent reply.

18.55 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, May 16, 1985/
Vaisakha 26, 1907 (Saka)*