

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at forty-four minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

[SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV in the Chair]

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

(i) REPORTED DECISION TO DISCONNECT THE HOT-LINE TELEPHONE LINES LINKING DIFFERENT AIRPORTS.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA (Tumkur): There have been distressing reports that aircraft safety has been in jeopardy in our country.

It has been reported that the Civil Aviation Department has recently decided to disconnect the hotline telephone lines which link the different airports in our country and also our airports with the airports in the neighbouring countries.

India is at present divided into four air space control regions, under Bombay, Delhi, Madras and Calcutta. With the hot line system, when an aircraft is ready to take off, say from Palam, (Delhi) to Santa Cruz, (Bombay), flight details are flashed from the former airport to the latter and clearance for the flight is obtained within minutes. Such a precaution is necessary to avoid collisions of aircraft flying in opposite directions. If two aircraft are to take off from different airports at almost one and the same time and are to cross each other, the heights at which they are to fly and avoid collisions are determined in advance through the exchange of hotline message and the crew of the aircraft adjust the flying heights of their planes suitably. The flashing of news in advance of an impending flight from the respective air control region to the region which the flight will enter is mandatory under the regulations of the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Now the reported decision of the Civil Aviation Department to do away with the hotline linking different airports poses a serious threat to the safety of aircraft.

It would appear that these hotlines are provided by P. & T. Department and the Civil Aviation Department has to pay some lakhs of rupees to P. & T. Department for their maintenance.

In recent months, the hotlines provided to the airports were found to be out of order and the air traffic control found it difficult to exchange messages through those hotlines. The equipment used for those lines was obsolete and complaints made from time to time to the Civil Aviation Department did not improve matters.

It is reported that the Civil Aviation Department found it to be waste of money to keep such unserviceable hotlines and decided to do away with them. It is also reported that in future the air traffic controls would make use of the aeronautical fixed telecommunication network which is a Morse code system and which takes nearly an hour to transmit a message. In an hour's time the aircraft would leave one air control region and enter another risking itself and risking the lives of passengers.

Safety of aircraft and of passengers should always be the primary consideration of the Civil Aviation Department. The Government should pay immediate attention to this problem. The hotline telephone connections between airports should not be done away with and they should be maintained properly with sound equipment. (Interruptions) This has to be immediately conveyed to the Ministry and action taken should also be reported to the House urgently, by tomorrow.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think the Ministry take note of this urgent matter.

(ii) INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES, SIMLA

SHRI ARJUN SETHI (Bhadrak): It is tragic that the prestigious Institute of Advanced Studies at Simla is in the doldrums. It has not awarded any fresh fellowship since 1978 and today where there are only two scholars at

[Shri Arjun Sethi]

the Institute on whom a whopping Rs. 23 lakhs were spent in 1980-81. All this is a far cry since 17 years ago when the Institute was set up with great hopes at the initiative of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan on the model of similar institutes at Princeton and Oxford Universities.

The Institute's aim was to provide an unfettered inter-disciplinary atmosphere for the study problems in the humanities and the social sciences. Distinguished scholars in various fields like the late Dr. Niharangan Ray, B.B. Lal, Dr. S.C. Dube, etc., have at one time or the other worked at the Institute to pursue their interests which otherwise would have been difficult for them to do. The Institute also has some important publications to its credit.

The great disservice to the Institute was done by the last Government which decided to close it down. Mercifully this has yet to happen. But a thick air of uncertainty still surrounds its future. The Government has before it the recommendations of a Committee headed by Dr. Krishna Kripalani to make the functioning of the institute more effective and broad based. It will do well to release this report so that a public debate can be initiated and a national institution saved from decay and oblivion.

(iii) NEED TO CONTINUE AIRPORT VISA SYSTEM

****SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK** (Cuttack): I would like to raise the following matter of urgent public importance under rule 377. The decision of the Government to abolish visas for foreign tourists has caused a great concern among the genuine tourists coming to India.

Tourism is the country's third largest exchange earner. It earns foreign exchange worth Rs. 700 crores annually. The country was expecting

a large chunk of foreign exchange from a large number of foreign visitors this year in view of the Asian Games. To attract foreign tourists the Government had introduced the airport visa system under which the tourists can easily get a 30-day visa as they land at the airport without going through the time consuming visa formalities at the Indian missions abroad. Nearly a million tourists avail themselves of the airport visa facility every year.

Getting a visa from an Indian mission overseas is normally a difficult task. Besides, a large number of employees will be required if the present system of giving visas to foreign tourists is abolished. It would be very difficult on the part of the Ministry of External Affairs to sanction such a vast number of additional employees overseas. The absence of such additional number of employees overseas may lead to harassment to the visa applicants. The hotel industry and travel agencies will be hit hard if the airport visas are abolished. The Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation has fixed an impressive target of receiving foreign tourists in 1982-83. If the visa is abolished, the target set by the Tourism Ministry cannot be achieved as the number of foreign tourists visiting India will be reduced. Thus the country will lose foreign exchange worth crores of rupees. In view of this, I demand that the airport visa system should not be abolished.

(iv) RACKET IN FORGED VISAS.

SHRI BAPUSAHEB PARULEKAR (Ratnagiri): A massive racket in forged visas is operating in the country, and has duped thousands of job seekers of easily a few crores of rupees. The glamour of earning petrodollars from Gulf countries and the foreign returned label have landed thousands of poor and gullible semi-literates in severe financial straits. The victims belong to economically

**The original speech was delivered in oriya.