

18 hrs.

[MR SPEAKER in the Chair]

DEATH OF SYED FAZL ALI

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Mr Speaker, Sir, may I have your permission to inform the House of a sad event that took place early this morning—the passing away of a very distinguished public servant, Shri Fazl Ali, the Governor of Assam? It is not usual in this House to make references to the deaths of people unless they are, or have been, Members of this House, or the Assemblies that preceded it. There have been, however, special and rare cases when this has been done. I think that this case is a special case in which it is proper and appropriate that with your permission I might make a mention in this House.

Shri Fazl Ali was a lawyer and his principal career was on the Bench, a long career as a judge of the Patna High Court, then Chief Justice of Patna, then a judge of the Federal Court of India and then a judge of the Supreme Court of India. Altogether that covers a very long period of time. And he was a very distinguished judge too. Later he became the Governor of Orissa. After that, for a period he served in an important commission—the States Re-organisation Commission. Then he went to Assam as Governor. It was really his quite extraordinary qualities which led us repeatedly to seek his assistance in such important and exacting work.

There is hardly any office, certainly not the office of Governor in India which is more difficult and more exacting than that of the Governor of Assam, because, apart from being the Governor of an important State, he is the Special Representative of the Government of India in regard to tribal areas there and in regard now to the Naga Hills-Tuensang area.

And as the House knows, we have had, during the past two-three years, a good deal of trouble in this area, a good many difficulties. We have always approached this problem, not from the point of view of just police work or army work of suppression, but always as that of trying to win these people in friendly ways—certainly, where there has been gross misbehaviour the police and the army come in—but otherwise to win them over, as we always went to win over people, our fellow citizens and our fellow nationals. In this work Shri Fazl Ali played an extraordinarily important and effective part.

I came in contact with him very intimately in this matter during the last two years as Minister of External Affairs, because the External Affairs Ministry is specially connected with it. So, I can speak with personal knowledge of the great tact, wisdom, ability and patience with which he dealt with all these questions in the Naga Hills-Tuensang area. In fact, it was largely due not to any coercive apparatus that we employed but his wisdom that we have succeeded in a very considerable measure there. In fact we had hoped and he had hoped and looked forward, to a very big step forward in regard to the future set-up there at a convention—not an official convention but a non-official convention of the Naga communities—which was going to consider it.

So, it is a very big loss to us, not only of a great Indian, a great public servant, but of a person engaged in this important and delicate task of winning over really by his goodwill and affection many of those people who are dissatisfied and who are troubled. Many of us will mourn his loss all over India. I am sure that the people of the Naga Hills-Tuensang Division will also greatly mourn his loss.

So, Sir, I venture to make this statement before this House and to request you and the House, to convey our feelings on this occasion to the devoted wife of this great Indian and his family. I am not asking for this House to be adjourned, because on a previous occasion I gave an assurance that when such a thing happens we will not ask for this and create precedents for repeated adjournments. But without an adjournment I do think we might express our sorrow and our deep sympathy to the family on this occasion.

Shri Jaipal Singh (Ranchi West—Reserved—Sch Tribes) Mr Speaker, may I, with your permission, associate myself with what the Leader of this House has said? And, in rising to speak, may I with all humility say that I am speaking on behalf of all the Members of Parliament of Bihar and Orissa? The last time I met him was at Dibrugarh and I was very surprised that the Governor should come to meet me at the aerodrome. He had known that I was going to the tribal areas in Assam. He had his itinerary in the Naga area but he altered that in order that we should meet, because he was very anxious that I should benefit from his experience and that he should benefit from mine. When he was the Governor of Orissa that was the first time I came across his special affection for the tribal people. He made his mark there. In Bihar itself I was associated with him in very many committees. By his death not only Bihar and Orissa but, I am quite certain, the country has lost a very distinguished Indian.

Shri Bagnath Singh (Varanasi): May I say a word as he belongs to my constituency?

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the House has referred to him. It is not unusual to make an obituary reference here regarding the death of great men, eminent men.

Shri Fazl Ali was certainly a great man and an eminent son of India.

He has served in various capacities and that has been referred to by the hon Prime Minister. He was an eminent judge. But he was more useful as a member of the States Reorganisation Commission. It was a very delicate task to handle when various interests were represented, and he had to be more or less a judge in deciding issues which have had far-reaching consequences. He endeared himself to one and all for he was affable in his manners. Really we find very few men of this type. He was an Indian first and everything else afterwards. We deeply mourn his loss. I fully associate myself with all the sentiments expressed so well by the hon. Prime Minister and I am sure the House will agree with me in conveying our condolence to the members of the bereaved family. As a mark of respect may I request the hon Members to stand in silence for a minute?

(The Members then stood in silence for a minute)

STATEMENT RE ACCIDENT TO HOIST CHAMBER AT BHAKRA

The Minister of Irrigation and Power (Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim): On the 21st evening the General Manager, Bhakra Dam, phoned up the Secretary to the Ministry of Irrigation and Power, Government of India, and informed him of the failure of the structure of the hoist chamber which controls the regulating gates of right diversion tunnel. This failure occurred at 18.00 hours and, as a result, water entered the galleries of the Dam and from there entered the left Power Plant. The structure of the dam was, however, reported safe.

A telegraphic message addressed to Bhakra Control Board received this morning from the General Manager, Bhakra Dam, reads as follows:

"Due to failure of structure of hoist chamber controlling regulating gates in right diversion tunnel at 18.00 hours today, the 21st August, the water entered