

17.03 hrs.

INTERNATIONAL TOURIST CON-  
FERENCES\*

**Shri Inder J. Malhotra** (Jammu and Kashmir): Mr. Chairman, in answer to starred question No. 1655 answered on the 20th April, 1961, it was stated that during the year 1959-60 the Government of India participated in various International Tourist Conferences numbering thirteen and the representatives of the Government of India attended all these International Tourist Conferences. These were held in different parts of the world, covering half of the world and there is no doubt that a good deal of expenditure by way of foreign exchange is involved whenever representatives of the Government of India attend these conferences. The reason why the representatives of the Government of India should attend these International Tourist Conferences; can I think, be that basically we want to promote tourist traffic, especially foreign tourist traffic. The Government of India participated in these conferences so that the decisions and recommendations of those conferences, taken in consultation with the other countries, would promote tourism and increase our foreign tourist traffic. There is also no doubt that during the last ten years there had been an increase as far as foreign tourist traffic to this country is concerned. But that increase had been all over the world. It is not specifically confined to India alone. So, we cannot feel very happy and satisfied over the fact that whatever efforts we have put in during the last ten years have met with success and we have achieved our goal in increasing foreign tourist traffic. My feeling is that we are tackling this problem of tourism and handling this campaign for the promotion of tourism half-heartedly. If we are really interested to see that tourism earns foreign exchange in large quantities, then we can earn 20 times more, at least, than what we are earning today, because I feel that there is still large scope in this country to increase foreign tourist traffic.

The scope is there, and that is why I feel that during the last ten years and even today we have been tackling this problem half-heartedly. I only appeal to the hon. Minister that we should not tackle this problem half-heartedly. If we really want to earn foreign exchange to the extent that the existing scope allows us, we should see that no loophole is left in the organisation of tourism, in the organisation of publicity campaigns and in the other means of handling our foreign tourist traffic. If we go on handling this problem half-heartedly, the result would be that whatever money we spend by way of sending our representatives to attend these International Tourist Conferences, by way of expenditure on the organisation of tourism inside the country will not, in my opinion, yield the result that it should.

The hon. Minister certainly knows more about the decisions and recommendations that were made at these International Tourist Conferences. But as far as I could know, I think that, basically, the recommendations might have been confined firstly to visa problems, secondly, to customs regulations, thirdly to hotel accommodation and fourthly travel facilities within the country. Why I mention these four aspects on which recommendations might have been made by these international tourist conferences is this: I feel that basically these are the bottlenecks in the way of increasing foreign tourist traffic. I would like the hon. Minister to give us more information regarding the decisions and recommendations made at these conference and say how far these recommendations and decisions have been implemented by the Government of India; I would also like him to tell us what are the recommendations which have not so far been implemented and what are the reasons, and what are the difficulties in the way because of which the Government feels that it is unable to implement those recommendations.

\*Half-an-hour Discussion.

1961 has been named as "Come to India" year. Whatever the Ministry of Transport and Communications did in 1959 and 1960, I think they must have kept in view that 1961 is going to be the "Come to India year". To some extent, I am satisfied over the way in which the publicity and other campaigns have been handled during the last two years, namely, 1959 and 1960, to see that 1961 really becomes the "Come to India Year". But here, I have to invite your attention to the very basic fact, namely, our efforts during 1959 and 1960 had been to increase the foreign tourist traffic. When we do that now, we have also to see that when the foreign tourists come to India, they feel comfortable and satisfied with all kinds of arrangements, so that when they visit India once, they must feel—and we want them to feel—that they should visit India at least ten times more. His first visit should not become the last visit, but should really be the beginning of the various visits he is going to make in the coming years.

Here I would like to invite your attention to an article written by an Australian writer, Don White, which was published in *Blitz* dated August 26, 1961. The article is very long, but I would just read a very small paragraph containing the experiences of this foreign tourist in India. There are certain rules that foreigners should get themselves registered with the police. The article says:

"At the Bombay Tourist Bureau, I was told that as I had been in India for one month, I would have to register with the Indian police. Fair enough—what better way to keep a check on how many visitors come to India?

I did not mind the taxi fare to the Foreign Registration Department at Crawford Market. What I did mind was that when I got there and produced my passport, the officer in charge waved me

away with a smile, "British nationals don't have to register—only foreigners. . . ."

Did not the Government Tourist Bureau official who sent me to Crawford Market know this? Apparently not."

This is a very humiliating experience for a foreign tourist. In the beginning portion this writer has confessed that he was motivated to come to India by the publicity campaign carried on in Australia about "Come to India Year 1961". As far as the handling of the publicity campaigns and efforts to enthrust the foreign tourists to come to India are concerned, I agree that the Ministry of Transport and Communications has been able to hit the mind of the foreign tourists. But when the foreign tourist comes to India with such enthusiastic hope, with the great ambition to see this great country, he has to face such humiliating experiences.

I would request the hon. Minister to see that we try our best so that the foreign tourists may not have to meet with such humiliating experiences. If we do not have properly trained men and women to handle our tourist bureaus, as I said in the very beginning, we are tackling this problem halfheartedly. If we do not have trained personnel, why not give them training? Why not spend some more money on the training of these men and women, so that they can handle tourist work nicely and the Government of India and the country as a whole do not get a bad name by the mishandling of one officer of the tourist bureau?

The concluding remarks of this writer in the same article are very interesting:

"From Bombay I'm going to Kashmir, to Agra, to Ajanta, Ellora, to Delhi, to Fatehpur Sikri, to Varanasi (I still think Benares is the better name), to Darjeeling.

[Shri Inder J. Malhotra]

But I'm not going to the Government Tourist Bureau any more. Is it that they just can't stand tourists?"

My purpose in pointing out these remarks of the foreign tourist is this. He is a writer and when he goes back to his country, if he gives these impressions, what will happen? These things would certainly go ultimately against the interests of promotion of tourist traffic and in the end what will happen is this. We earn so much of foreign exchange by way of tourism. But if these things go on happening, ultimately we would be losing all that foreign exchange and whatever money we spent—by way of foreign exchange or in India—on tourists would all go to waste.

**Shri Vidya Charan Shukla** (Baloda Bazar): Sir, my hon. friend mentioned that the officials of the Department of Tourism went out 25 to 30 times. I would like to know from the hon. Minister if there was any valid reason for their going out or not or whether their visits did not produce the desired results that they wanted to have. My second question is, whether our tourist officials who have been making trips abroad have not brought a good name and distinction to our tourist organisation in this country. My third question is, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, whether the article from *Blitz* which our hon. friend has chosen to read here in spite of the very indifferent attitude or the reputation that this paper has, is correct. The facts as stated in this article of the *Blitz* are quite damaging. I suppose they are untrue. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether they are true or not.

**Shri Inder J. Malhotra**: Sir, I would like to tell my hon. friend that the article is not written by any of the *Blitz* people but the article is written by one Australian by the name Mr. Donn White who came to India.

**Shri Vidya Charan Shukla**: I would like to point out to my hon. friend

that articles may be written by anybody, but the editor publishes them with his own colouring. Anybody connected with journalism knows that articles are not published in papers as they are sent to them. Anyway, I would like the hon. Minister specifically to state what the value of this article is.

**Shri Ansar Harvani** (Fatehpur): It has been mentioned that a number of times the senior officers of the Tourist Department went to attend conferences outside. Probably, it was sometimes necessary, but I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it was not possible that some of these conferences could have been attended by our representatives who are running the various tourist bureau outside India instead of sending people from here?

**Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri** (Nabadwip): I only wanted to bring a point to the notice of the hon. Minister. It is a fact, as my hon. friend has just pointed out, that hotel accommodation does form one of the great difficulties that tourists feel in India and I would like to know how much money has been spent for building hotel accommodation. That is one of the crying needs as far as tourism is concerned. Secondly, whether we attend conferences or not, I think it is only necessary that we treat this whole tourist development process as an industry in itself, and we should send out people to study how tourism is developed in the West. It should be like a productive engineering study, because we must produce conditions that tourists will like. Let us go to foreign countries and really take a lesson from them as to the smiling service available there. When the 'phone is taken up and a wrong number is given, even in hotels if the tourist has made a mistake, the answer is "You are welcome, Sir." That makes all the difference to the feeling that the tourists have. I hope that these small things will be looked into. The Tourist Development Council is

there and I hope the Minister will clarify the position as to what we really need to do particularly in the way of hotels and how to study the conditions outside and to make them available in India as far as possible.

**Shri Subbiah Ambalam** (Ramana-thapuram): One of the difficulties experienced by the tourists is that in places of disembarkation the tourists are asked to produce income-tax clearance certificates. I feel that the tourist officers do not guide these tourists properly in the way of obtaining these clearance certificates from the income-tax office, if at all they are necessary. I have come across a number of cases in my constituency because it is through that place that so many tourists travel from India to Ceylon. At Dhanushkodi most of the tourists are held up for want of income-tax clearance certificates and they are put to enormous difficulty. They have to come away from Dhanushkodi and spend one or two days in a place where the income-tax office is situate to obtain these income-tax clearance certificates. The tourists say that they were not properly informed as to the necessity of obtaining the clearance certificates before they leave India. I want to know whether definite instructions have been issued to the tourist officers to procure necessary clearance certificates wherever necessary or to see that such of the tourists need not necessarily produce these income-tax certificates before they leave this country.

**Shri Nath Pai** (Rajapur): Whereas I agree that we have made some commendable progress in the field of tourism, there is much to be desired if we want to boost tourism, as some other countries have done, and so I should like to get some satisfactory replies from the hon. Minister on these matters.

It is an extraordinary experience that when a foreign tourist arrives and lands at the airport or at the different ports, wherever it may be,

there is a general tendency, particularly on the part of the customs officials, to assume that every foreign gentleman who is entering this country, or the lady as the case may be, is a suspect, is a smuggler. The hon. Minister and, perhaps, some of his civil service assistants must have travelled abroad. In a port like Zurich, where they are clearing an aeroplane every ten minutes or so, the customs formalities are over in less than five minutes. I have passed through that place—I am sorry for the personal reference—about twenty times and never was I detained for more than five minutes. But when I landed in my own country at the airport in Bombay, where we have friends it was never less than two hours before I was cleared. They never try to realise that people who travel 16 hours out of every 24 hours want things done in a quick and efficient manner and that 99 per cent of them are decent people wanting to come to this country, see and fall in love with this country if they can, and this is the first terrible experience awaiting them in the ports or at the aerodrome, and nothing seems to have been done to mitigate this.

Times without number, hon. Members have tried to raise this question. The whole process is so drab and nobody understands why it is so that whereas in London, in Paris, in Zurich, in fact, any air port in the world, all formalities, like medical, customs, etc. are finished in less than about ten minutes, why in India it takes so much time. And in India we know that when all this is done, spies do come, the smugglers do come and we have never succeeded in stopping them, except in detaining the honest type of persons.

I have heard extraordinary complaints, which I would not like to mention here, from foreigners who wanted to visit this country, because it is an experience which is unexpected by them. Ours is a free country.

[Shri Nath Pai]

We have not condoned ourselves with an iron curtain, nor is ours a police State and yet the first impression which the foreign tourist gets is none too pleasing.

I would like to make this as my criticism, but more as an expression of very sad experience, and I may say that, not once but innumerable times, I have asked this question, but not even on one occasion has any satisfactory reason been given for this. We would, therefore, like to know what is being done to see that the foreign tourist who comes to this country likes this country and whereas the formalities, whether they relate to the requirements of security of the country, law or health or customs, are complied with, at the same time, we do not make them a matter of harassment for the tourists.

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Communications**

(**Shri Raj Bahadur**): Mr. Chairman, I am grateful to the hon. Member, Shri Malhotra, for raising this discussion because, I am sure, it will clear some of the mist that sometimes surround the visits of our officers abroad.

To begin with, let me assure that it is not lightly that any officer is allowed to go abroad on deputation or on a delegation. The fullest possible scrutiny is made. There is the Secretaries Committee which scrutinises every case, and every case of deputation abroad also gets the approval of the Cabinet. It is not in a light-hearted or easy manner that any and every officer is allowed to go abroad, and unless there are valid reasons and most justifiable reasons, an officer would not be allowed to go abroad.

So far as the hon. Member who has raised this discussion is concerned, I am glad that he has not dwelt much on the validity of the reasons, for such officers to go abroad. He has dealt only with our deficiencies, if they may be so termed, in providing necessary facilities for tourism. He has not questioned the propriety of

these officers going abroad and attending international meetings. But that particular point in a relevant manner has been raised by my esteemed friend, Shri Harvani. He asked: Would it not be possible for us to ask the local tourist officers to attend these conferences?

Out of the 13 cases that have been detailed in the statement given in reply to the question which forms the basis of this particular discussion it would be seen that in as many as 7 cases where the meetings of the Conference were not of that importance which required the Head of the Department being sent from here, the local tourist officers or directors were asked to attend and represent the Department and the country's view point. But in cases where the Head of the Department or his deputy had to go there were indeed important conferences.

We all know that the International Union of Official Travel Organisations, the IUOTO as we call that, is an association of official travel departments or organisations and our Department of Tourism is a member of it. In fact, our Department of Tourism is a member of several other international organisations and we have been trying to build up contacts abroad in the field of tourist industry. It must be readily conceded by all concerned—think we should be all at one on the point—that tourism is international. It requires international contacts. International contacts cannot be developed unless and until people go and meet others, you mix with people and you get to know what other people have go to say about their tourist industry. Then it is not merely mixing with one particular trade or profession connected with tourism. You have got to mix with people who run the air services, who organise travel tours. We have got to meet with people in the travel trade, that is, the travel agencies, hoteliers and all other classes of peo-

ple who are important for this particular industry.

It would be idle to suppose that we can build our tourism sitting at home here. I am glad that the hon. Member himself has showered quite a few encomiums on the success of the publicity campaign and the results flowing from that. But he says that perhaps the results of the publicity campaign that we have so far carried on have not been commensurate with our efforts and that in the normal course too the increase in tourist traffic would come. It was bound to come to us even if we did nothing about it. To a certain extent, as a broad maxim perhaps that might be true. But the question is that so far as our country was concerned, we did not hear much of tourism. I would dare say in all humility that five years ago we were not conscious of it. People were not conscious of tourism, I would say this august House was not taking so much notice of tourism before 1957. It is not that I am trying to make a claim and say that we have done this or that. But today we are very much tourist conscious and in reality, our tourist campaign has succeeded. That is why our tourist traffic has increased during the last ten years by about 500 per cent.

It is true that our facilities at home have not kept pace with the requirements of tourist traffic. We have not been able to provide the necessary internal air transport, necessary hotel accommodation etc., but that is not because of any act of omission or commission on the part of the Tourist Department or the Director General of Tourism. That is because of the inherent difficulties that we are labouring under. We very well know that the hotel industry is in the private sector. The Government would like to step in only whenever there are such gaps which cannot be allowed to wait and which have to be bridged. Therefore we would like the private sector to come up. We have provided all facilities for this purpose by giving all incentives for more hotels to come up. We immediately require about

3,500 additional beds. This is our urgent need. I am glad to say that in this direction also our efforts are beginning to bear fruit.

A very relevant point has been raised by my hon. friend, Shri Nath Pai, about the question of facilitation. At this stage, I will not go into the broad categories of work that are disposed of at the international conferences which I may touch upon in my concluding observations. Let me tell him that so far as the question of customs formalities are concerned, there is a high-powered committee consisting of one or two Secretaries or Joint Secretaries and the Director General of Tourism himself, who themselves periodically and occasionally pay surprise visits at the air port to see how far the customs formalities are being observed in a manner which is the least irksome and annoying to the incoming tourists. I can quite imagine that because of our peculiar difficulties in this respect, we have not been able to overcome all the shortcomings. Because, it is also well known that so far as we are concerned, we, off and on, hear reports of cases of smuggling—smuggling by people who seemingly look like good gentlemen, but who in their coats or otherwise in their trunks carry all these unauthorised things. We cannot deny that the incidents do occur. Naturally, we would not like that our economy should suffer by the undesirable and pernicious practice of smuggling. That is why we have got to be a little extra cautious. Then, we are not the only country suffering from this handicap. I may say, in principle, we are committed to providing the most convenient way for checking off at the customs posts of these foreign incoming tourists. It was as far back as 1958 that we ratified the U. N. Convention on customs formality. Thus I can say that so far as falling in line with advanced countries in this respect is concerned, this step has already been taken.

In actual practice, I would say that our Customs officials are up against a

[Shri Raj Bahadur]

difficult task. On the one hand, they have got to avoid the irksome experiences of detailed and close-up check up for the tourists. On the other hand, they have to be equally cautious that nothing untoward happens, and there is no smuggling. Between the two, we are trying to strike a balance. I would say that by and large, while there may be some occasion for complaint here and there, the Customs officials are trying to do their best. But, we do not say that we have achieved our final goal. From month to month, we are discussing this question at the highest level and the Ministry of Finance are conscious about it. We propose not to relax our efforts, not to rest on our oars, but to go ahead as quickly, and as effectively as possible to minimise difficulties. Let me give that assurance to the House.

Shri Vidya Charan Shukla asked whether there were any valid reasons for the Heads of the Tourist Department to go and also what were the results of their visit. So far as the question of the validity of the reasons is concerned, I would just in passing refer to the meetings that have been held of the Executive committee and of the General Assembly of the I.U.O.T.U. The Director General has gone four times in 1959-1960 for attending the Executive committee or the General Assembly: in May, 1959, again in November-December, 1959; then he attended a meeting of South East Asia Travel Organisation and the 15th General Assembly of the I.U.O.T.U. The I.U.O.T.U. enjoys the recognition of the United Nations. In fact, I may recall to the House that our Director General of Tourism, Shri Chib was the President of this Organisation for the year 1957-58. It was under his Presidentship that the I.U.O.T.U. first passed a Resolution asking the U.N. to call a world conference and evolve a Convention on tourism. This particular Resolution was sent to the U.N. Economic and Social Council. The E.C.O.S.O.C. wanted a working paper

on the subject. On no other person than Shri Chib, the Director General, fell this responsibility, although at that time he was no more the President of the Organisation, to draft the working paper. I think, that by itself is a recognition of the merit of this officer. That was also a recognition of the level to which our tourist industry has gone. Because, the D. G. symbolises our tourist industry. We should be proud of the honour that was given to him by the ECOSOC. He drafted the paper, in consultation with the U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. That paper was put to the E.C.O.S.O.C. in July 1959, who approved that paper. They charged the Secretary General of the U.N. on the basis that paper, to call a world conference on tourism not later than 1963. In 1961, again, the E.C.O.S.O.C. reconsidered the question to process further arrangements about it. Shri Chib was asked by the I.U.O.T.U. to help it at the E.C.O.S.O.C. meeting, so that he may clarify any points that may arise. He was selected and he went on deputation in April at the expense of the I.U.O.T.U. He did not go at our expense. On previous occasions, of course, he went at our expense. I would say that unless and until we had sent an officer of that level and of that status, we would not have got this advantage. The next question asked was: 'what have been the fruits of these officers' visits abroad? What have been the results that they have achieved thereby either in regard to facilitation or relaxation of frontier formalities or in regard to other matters?'. I should say that broadly speaking, there are five categories of work that are considered and discussed by the IUOTO. These are frontier formalities; cheaper modes of travel, provision of destination facilities; proper statistical and research machinery; and publicity technique. The last two are within our powers or within the ken of the Department of Tourism, and we take care of them. We have been doing that, and we have been appreciated for this.

As regards frontier formalities, as I said, we have accepted the recommendations in principle, but their implementation is bound to take time in view of the policy that our country follows. We are a non-aligned country, and, therefore, we cannot abolish all visas and all frontier formalities all at once, but we have been trying our level best to do so.

So far as the provision of destination facilities and cheaper modes of travel are concerned, I have already referred to them.

I think that in the circumstances in which we are today, we have got to give due emphasis and proper emphasis to the promotion of tourism. We have allowed these officers to go abroad only for that reason. We want to earn more foreign exchange. Let me only remind the House of how little we earning, despite the fact that there is almost an 'explosion' of tourism all the world over. As against 17 lakhs of people that come from the United States every year, we are getting hardly about 25,000. As against their spending about \$2.5 billion, or Rs. 1250 crores, we are getting only about Rs. 4 to 5 crores from the tourists the United States. Naturally, therefore, it is necessary that we should build up our contacts. We are doing that.

I think that we should rather give a pat on the back of the officers and of all the people who are engaged in this task. On this occasion, I am reminded of the travel trade in the country, that is, the travel agencies who have been doing excellent work and of our hoteliers who are trying to do their bit. I am also reminded,—not because of my hon. friend who is sitting behind me—of the shikar out fitters who have been doing excellent work in the promotion of tourism by attracting people interested in shikar.

So, all these people, whether they be our hoteliers, or our travel agents or our tourist officers, are working as

a very well co-ordinated and harmonious team. I think that they deserve all our support and our sympathy and our encouragement. And we will ill serve the purpose of the promotion of tourism if we were to say anything that might dampen their enthusiasm or that might discourage them.

**Shri Subbiah Ambalam:** What about income-tax clearance?

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** That is only for outgoing people. An income-tax clearance certificate is required only in the case of people who go out from our country. I do not think that that would be relevant for the purpose of this discussion.

**Shri Vidya Charan Shukla:** What about the report in the *Blitz*?

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** About *Blitz*, I would not like to say anything, simply because something has been published there; for, we do not know how far it is correct.

**Shri Inder J. Malhotra:** At least, the hon. Minister can make an enquiry from the Tourist Bureau.

**Shri Raj Bahadur:** As regards the enquiry also, we are not bound to take note of everything that appears in any paper. We shall take into account the standard of the paper also. If the complaint had been properly addressed to us, we would have very much welcomed it. But I would like to repudiate all the insinuations that have been made in that issue, with all the vehemence that I can command. I am not bound to take notice of anything and everything that appears in any paper. We shall take notice of it only if it appears in a paper which deserves our notice.

17.39 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, the September 5, 1961/Bhadra 14, 1883 (Saka).*