

other institutions of learning must maintain a universal outlook and promote the culture of tolerance. And the third one is, regional co-operation -SAARC - must be strengthened. We have political problems with countries, particularly, with Pakistan, at this point of time, but cultural diplomacy and cultural contact must go on and, in fact, neither here nor there, the artistes, intellectuals or poets of other countries, generally speaking, should be harassed in any manner.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let me tell you. It has been pointed out to me that you are not speaking from your seat. You must speak from your seat. Now, let us close this. There is only one Special Mention remaining. Smt. Ambika Soni.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: I am sorry.

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, I may respectfully submit a point. To my knowledge, there was no harassment of the artistes. If the hon. Member has any information, it is okay. I am not going to dispute that. But, as per the report, there was no harassment, whatsoever, of the person who was giving the performance.

Violation of Delhi Master Plan

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI (Delhi): Sir, thank you for allowing me to raise an important issue of what, I think, is a public concern, which really puts to naught all the glib and loud talk of transparency, democratic functioning and a pro-poor, pro-farmer, policy of the Government. Above all, this also brings to the front burner what we, in the Congress, have always said, "The hidden agenda of safronisation" and, in this issue, which I am raising, I am talking of what can be considered as, safronising of a green belt along the banks of the Yamuna River. I would like to inform, through you, Sir, the House that about 30 hectares of prime land in the bed of the Yamuna River has been allotted, in a surreptitious manner, to a private party. Sir, land worth crores of rupees has been sold for about Rs. 77 lakhs per acre. Several poor farmers, who eked out a living by seasonal cultivation, because this is a flood-prone area, for over forty years have been dispossessed. The farmers are left with a bleak future and their families are facing starvation. All this had happened last week when there were three continuous holidays in succession. A number of police personnel and top DDA officials, armed with tin sheets and other material required for making a bundan.' around the land, which has been allotted,

reached that area. They did not allow the farmers, who have been living there since 30 years - three generations - or, maybe more than that, to come anywhere near that area. The poor farmers were threatened and intimidated by the officials. The officials told the farmers that they had orders from the top to go to any extent to get this land vacated by the farmers and secure it to a new party. Sir, all of us, naturally, would like to know who the person is and for whom the police, the DDA and, I am told, even the Lieutenant-Governor and also the Urban Development Minister, about three months ago, decided to overlook the fact that the same proposal had been turned down twice by the DDA's apex policy making body. And these guardians of green belt and the environment reversed this decision. They even decided to change the Master Plan of Delhi. And the DDA, which has till now permitted greenery in this area, or, minor recreational activities, has now allowed construction of a temple and other constructions of public and semi-public use on this very land.

Sir, the society or the person for whom all this has been done, for whose benefit the farmers have been dispossessed of their land, for whom, I think, the DDA has reversed all its decisions, for whom the Delhi Master Plan has been changed, is a society, called, the Buchanawasi Shri Akshar Purushotamma Sansthan, headed by Swami Dharmavatsalji of Gujarat. Sir, after this, I don't need to spell out who the top leader of this Government is, behind all this hyper-activity of the police and the DDA. When Members of my party and others concerned approached the DDA, an official who went on record, said, "These farmers have no *pattas*. So, there is no question of dispossessing them". I have received all the documents from two cooperative societies who were allowed to have indulged in cultivating this belt which is flood-prone, way back in 1952. I have their *khasra* numbers, their revenue records, their *girdavaries*, their *bijli key bills*, and other things. These people were allowed to cultivate this land, where no construction was allowed, under the Grow More Food Scheme. They could take the seasonal crop as and how it came. And now, using this fact that the farmers have no *pattas*, and they are not the owners of the land, they were forced to sign documents. Now, they are going to hand over this land, which they have been cultivating, to *swami*. They can go and visit *swamiji* at his Delhi residence, that is, 8, Gujarat Vihar, Delhi, and take compensation for their standing crop. Photographs of these farmers were taken. Those photographs were affixed on these forced-signatured documents, handing over their land to *Swamiji*. No doubt, *swamiji* made

payment for the standing crop. He made payments for the land at the rate of Rs. 77 lakhs per acre through personal cheques, drawn on the ICICI bank, and not the society. But, despite all this, my fear is that this whole process of surreptitiously giving prime land, along the river bank or on the bed of the river bank around Delhi, may not stop here. This incident of 30 hectares of prime land being given may be extended from Okhla right up to Wazirabad, which is along the national highway, maybe, similar bodies or institutions, favoured by the BJP, may be chosen to give this land. I want a question to be answered as to when did the DDA take this policy decision to sell land which was now part of the Delhi Master Plan, as a green belt? If they took this decision, was it not thought necessary to put a public notice that this land is up for sale? Let the highest bidder come. Let it be auctioned. Why should it be given at the rate of peanuts, when it costs hundreds of crores? Why has the whole deal been settled for Rs. 27 crores only? This is a flood-prone area, if you are allowing construction over there, whether of a temple, or a building adjoining the temple, naturally *bands*, or some embankments will have to be made; otherwise construction is not possible. If these embankments are made, then the entire area of Mandawali, Mayur Vihar, Kilokari, Nehru Nagar, newly established trans-Yamuna, Kalindi and Maharani Bagh will either become water-logged or will be flooded. I also want the Government to answer these questions:

How are you going to allow these constructions? What amendments have taken place in the Master Plan to allow this? What guarantees can you give to this House that this is something which will not be repeated again and that this will be reversed? Why have the farmers been dispossessed of the land? No doubt, they did not own the *pattas*, but they were cultivating for over three generations.

If this is the way the Government is going to work in a transparent and democratic fashion. Sir, then, we are at your mercy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned for one hour.

The House then adjourned for lunch at forty minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at forty-four minutes past two of the clock, THE VICE - CHAIRMAN (SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK) in the Chair.

SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA (West Bengal): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, before we take up the Appropriation (Railways) No. 2 Bill, 2000, I would

[3 MAY, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

like to give my personal explanation on one point. Sir, during the Special Mentions, when Special Mention No. 4 was being raised by Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, in the pre-lunch session, certain remarks have been made by me, which I feel were not in the best spirit and dignity of the House. I offer my apology for the same. These inadvertent expressions might have hurt the feelings and the sentiments of the individual Members and the Chair, particularly, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu and Mr. S.S. Ahluwalia. I offer my apology to them. Thank you.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमार्शंकर कौशिक): अब विनियोग(रेल) संख्यांक 2 विधेयक, 2000 पर चर्चा प्रारंभ होगी। माननीय रेल मंत्री जी।

The Appropriation (Railways) no. 2 Bill, 2000

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMTA BANERJEE): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the services of the financial years 2000-2001 for the purposes of Railways, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The question was proposed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK): The motion is moved. Shri Ranganath Misra.

SHRI RANGANATH MISRA (Orissa): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I would like to deal with certain aspects of the railway activities. The Indian Railways are, probably, one of the largest network in the world and the system is already 150 years old. In 1953, we celebrated the centenary of the Indian Railways. It is the sinew of the nation. In fact, the network, which ties up the entire country, has been operating the largest transport and the largest traffic. A crore of people travel every day. At the time of need, the Railways have provided the greatest support like movement of food in famine. Today, the scarcity of water is being attended to with the assistance of the Indian Railways. At the time of emergency, the soldiers are moved. During the Second World War the Indian Railways provided the largest transport for the Army movement. Though the system is large, and it is one of the single largest institutions in the world which carries on commercial activities, there are a lot of things which require improvement.