

RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 5th August, 1993/the
14th Shravana, 1915 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the
clock. Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Down-grading of first class tickets in AI's Washington Office

*141. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: †
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIA-
TION AND TOURISM be pleased to
state:

(a) whether Government's atten-
tion has been drawn to a report
which appeared in the 'Observer',
New Delhi dated 21st June, 1993 un-
der the caption "Scandal in Air India
Washington Office";

(b) whether it is a fact that certain
officials of Air India Office in Wash-
ington were involved in deals in
which they down-graded first class air
tickets to club class and pocketed
the difference in fare;

(c) if so, what are the details in
this regard; and

(d) what action Government pro-
pose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIA-
TION AND TOURISM (SHRIMATI
SUKHBANS KAUR): (a) to (d) A
statement is laid on the table of the
House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) At per Industry practice,
airlines entertain requests from passen-
gers to down-grade their tickets. The
difference of fare is converted into
Miscellaneous Charges Order (MCO)
which can be used for further trans-
portation etc. The refund has to be

made to the Indentor/Purchaser of
the ticket.

In August, 1991, the World Bank
advised airlines including Air India
not to entertain any request for
down-gradation of tickets by their
staff. After issue of this advice,
there was one instance where the
first class tickets issued to a Senior
Economist of the World Bank and his
wife on Washington/New York/Lon-
don/ Saana/ London/ New York/
Washington sector were down-graded
to club class and the M.C.O. repre-
senting the difference in fare was
handed over by Air India to the pass-
enger. This was a deviation from the
normal practice of sending the M.C.O.
to the authorised travel agent of
the World Bank.

(d) While there is no evidence of
any mis-appropriation, the concerned
Area Sales Manager has been caution-
ed by Air India.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Sir, first of
all, I have a problem. The question
arises from a report that came in the
'Observer' of New Delhi of 21st June,
1993, which specifically deals with cor-
ruption involving the Washington Air
India office and some World Bank
officials, etc. In the question that I
framed, the Secretariat has removed
every reference to the World Bank
though the reply of the hon. Minister
brings out the World Bank, and that
is the only fact that it refers to.
But the Secretariat has removed all
my references to the World Bank
officials, and the aspect that I had
asked in my question is deleted com-
pletely. And to that extent, my ques-
tion becomes partly infructuous. This
is the submission that I would like
to make now, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the World
Bank official have been mentioned in
the reply.

AN HON. MEMBER: But not the
names.

† The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Viren J. Shah.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Yes, Sir, in the answer only. My question contains references to the World Bank officials, and it was deleted completely.

AN. HON. MEMBER: The question has been deleted.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: It was fortunate that the Minister had to refer to it because the main gravamen of the charge in that newspaper report refers to the World Bank officials and Air India. But the Secretariat of Rajya Sabha—I have great respect for it no personal affront to anybody—removed all references to the World Bank officials giving a reason, perhaps, that World Bank officials should not be involved. But the entire issue is about the World Bank officials and the Air India office in Washington DC.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a reference to a Senior Economist of the World Bank and his wife in the reply.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: That is in the reply. But why was it deleted from the question itself?

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, your question has been deleted?

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: My submission is that it is included in the question when I put it. If you permit me, Sir, I will read out: "Whether it is a fact that certain officials of the Air India office in Washington and some World Bank officials have been involved in covert deals by having first class tickets changed or down-graded to club class and pocketing the difference in fares?" If you look at the question that is printed here, Sir, they have removed all references to the World Bank in my question which was given in writing. And 'covert' को भी छेड़ दिया। Then there was in my question, "What are the names of officials of Air India involved?" That is also deleted. Then, my question was: "Since how long these dirty deals

have been going on in Air India?" That also is deleted. Then my question was: "Whether any close relatives of the officials have been provided jobs in the World Bank office, and if so, what are the names of these officials and the names of the close relatives?" That is also deleted.

SHRI M. A. BABY: How can it be done, Sir?

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Then, the question was: "And what action Government has taken or proposes to take in the matter?" "What action Government has taken" is deleted. What remains is... (Interruptions)

SHRI M. A. BABY: Sir, this is a serious matter. Sir, it is not for the first time... (Interruptions)

This is a case of breach of privilege. ... (Interruptions.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. What I have been told is that the P.S. to the hon. Member went to the Minister's office and wanted this to be deleted. I do not know whether it is true or not.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: I deny this. He was called by the office and told that this will be deleted. He was told this by the Questions Branch. He had no option but to accept it. He drew my attention to it and I said... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think such drastic deletion of the question was incorrect and, therefore, I am prepared to direct that this question be answered in full on other day.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: May I make a submission, Sir?

SHRI M. A. BABY: It may be listed as Question No. 1. That is very important

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: There are two aspects. I am grateful to you for doing that. But my submission

is two-fold. One is, there Secretariat may not kindly do such a thing without talking to the Member himself. The P.S. of a Member is totally unable to decide and he gets brow-beaten. My second submission is, as you mentioned in the House, and the hon. Prime Minister is present here, there have been several instances during the last few months when Minister's replies are so grossly inadequate, and many a time, a statement is laid on the Table of the House which every Member in the House does not have before him. Therefore, my submission is that it must be read out and the reply should be full and adequate. You had similarly directed the Minister for Surface Transport. So this may be done. And if you say so, we will keep it for the next first available day as Question No. 1.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will do that.

SHRI G. G. SWELL: I need your guidance. I was told just now that the Member had gone to the Ministry and asked for a change. Is that a new practice? After we put the question, we never do that and we never go to the Minister and ask for a change of the question. Is that a practice. Can it be done?

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: I have denied it. I totally deny it.

SHRI G. G. SWELL: The very fact that this has been mentioned that a Member had gone to the Minister and requested for a change is the point on which I want to know whether this is the practice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I agree with you that it should not be the practice; it should not be made into a practice. Shall we now go to the next question? Question No. 142.

Implementation of "food for work" programme under JRY

*142. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the food for work programme under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna is not being effectively implemented, as States are lifting less foodgrains under the programme; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to ensure effective and adequate implementation of this programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT) (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Implementation of 'Food for work Programme' under JRY

In the year 1989-90, when the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana was started, distribution of foodgrains as part of the wages to the workers engaged in JRY works was made optional, at the request of the States. Accordingly, 18 States/UTs did not opt for distribution of foodgrains under JRY. Only the remaining States/UTs lifted and supplied foodgrains under JRY. However, in June 1992, the Government of India reviewed the position keeping in view the need to improve the nutritional standards of the workers engaged under JRY & their families and it was decided that distribution of 2 kgs of food-grains per manday generated under JRY be made compulsory. The State Governments/Union Territories could take necessary administrative action only thereafter in 1992-93 for the distribution of foodgrains as part of the wages under JRY. It is expected that the quantity of foodgrains lifted and utilised will increased substantially during the current year.

The Ministry of Rural Development is constantly monitoring the distribution of foodgrains under JRY in the States in coordination with the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Civil Supplies. To ensure that