

Request for Reducing the Helicopter Fare to Vaishnu Devi Temple

SHRI DHARAM CHANDER PRASHANT (Jammu and Kashmir): Madam Deputy Chairman, my Special Mention relates to the Vaishno Devi pilgrim centre. Madam, people, not in thousands, but in lakhs, visit this holy place. It is at a height of about five thousand feet from the sea level. The mountain is full of vegetation and the scenery is very picturesque. Pilgrims from all parts of the country are attracted to this Temple. People not only from our country, but also Indians living abroad, come here and visit this place with the result that the number of pilgrims has gone upto about fifteen lakhs per year. The late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, visited the Vaishno Devi Cave Shrine twice and the former Presidents, Gyan Zail Singh and Shri Sanjeeva Reddy, also visited this place. Dr. Radhakrishnan, when he was the Vice-President of India, expressed his desire and willingness to visit this cave shrine, but there was no helipad then. A helipad was constructed, but there was no helicopter service. Last year, Madam, I had requested the Minister of Civil Aviation to start a helicopter service. He agreed to it and said, "I will give the first priority to the Vaishno Devi Temple." So, a helicopter service was started. I congratulate the Minister for having started the helicopter service. But my complaint is about the charges, about the fare.

Madam, the fare from Jammu to Vaishno Devi Cave is Rs. 400. The fare from Jammu to Srinagar is Rs. 250 and the fare from Delhi to Srinagar is Rs. 600. While the time taken from Jammu to Srinagar is forty minutes, this is only ten minutes. Why not, therefore, reduce this fare? Lakhs of pilgrims come there and it is an important pilgrim centre. Apart from many poor people, many aged people, people who are at the age of 80 or so, visit this place, and children also go there.

Therefore, Madam, my request is that the helicopter charges should be reduced at least by fifty per cent, that is, to Rs. 200, in order to facilitate the visit of many pilgrims to this place. Thank you, Madam.

Reported Soviet Prime Minister's Statement Regarding Indo-Soviet Negotiations for Setting up Nuclear Power Plants

DR. H. P. SHARMA (Rajasthan): Madam Deputy Chairman, my Special Mention is based upon the news item that appeared on November 25 in newspapers and the leading articles that followed later on. There was a statement by the visiting Soviet Prime Minister, Mr. Nikolai Ryzhkov just before he left India wherein he stated that the USSR had offered nuclear power plants to India and that final details were being negotiated.

Madam, the issue is much too important to be discussed either on party lines or on political affiliations or ideological lines, because it involves our declared national stand for the past 25 years as to our stand on NPT. The Tarapore plant was based upon the use of enriched uranium as fuel and pressurised hot water facilities. Madam, the fuel was entirely imported from abroad. The problems into which we ran later on are too recent to be recounted again. The United States refused to supply enriched uranium and the power plants were coming to a total close, when only by a roundabout manner France agreed to supply enriched uranium.

Madam, our technology of producing nuclear power is based upon the use of natural uranium as fuel, heavy water as coolant and the Candou type of reactors. These are the three parts of our own indigenously developed technology. We have extensive deposits of natural uranium, while for the enriched uranium, if we go in for that technology we have only a very limited amount of uranium of that type which can be converted into enriched uranium.