

## RAJYA SABHA

*Monday, the 21st July, 1986/30 Asadha, 1908 [Saka].*

The house met at eleven Mr. Chairman in the chair.

### OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN : Hon. Members must have learnt with profound sorrow the news of the passing away of Shri K.C. Sebastian, a former Member of the Rajya Sabha from the State of Kerala.

Shri Sebastian was born in November 1929 at Karoor, Palai of Kottayam District of Kerala and got his education at Changana-cherry and Trivandrum. A bachelor, Shri Sebastian took up journalism at the age of 17 as a reporter and worked for an established Paper 'Deepika' and till his death was Special Correspondent of that newspaper. He was associated with several social and cultural organisations in Kerala for the past several years. He was a Member of the Kerala Press Academy and Medical College Advisory Committee. Shri Sebastian was also associated with Shri Chitra Arts Gallery. »

Shri Sebastian was a Member of this House from April, 1979 to April, 1985. During his term in the Rajya Sabha, Shri Sebastian took keen interest in the deliberations of the House.

We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri K.C. Sebastian.

I request Members to rise in their places and observe a minute's silence, as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.

*(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Secretary-General will convey to the members, of the benighted family our sense of profound sorrow and deep sympathy.

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## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

41. [Postponed to the 4th August, 1986.]

### Speed postal service

\*42- SHRI KAPIL VERMA Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to introduce domestic and international 'speed postal service';

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) by when this new service is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA) : (a) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to introduce Speed Post Service, both Internal and International, in selected towns in the country.

(b) (i) The Internal Speed Post is proposed to be introduced at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Bangalore for the present. The articles booked under the Service will carry a time, frame for delivery on the following working day. A special charge will be payable on such Articles in addition to the normal postage for registered air-mail articles.

(ii) International Speed Post Service is proposed to be introduced between India and U.K., U.S.A., Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and Hong Kong. This service will be available from the four metro cities—Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras—to the Speed Post Centres of these countries.

(c) (i) It is proposed to introduce the domestic Speed Post Service from 1-8-1986.

(ii) International Speed Post Service will be introduced between India and U.K., Federal Republic of Germany and Hong Kong from 1-8-1986. The service for U.S.A. and Japan will be introduced subsequently.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA : Sir, the new scheme is welcome because of late there has been a sharp deterioration in the postal services. I want to point out one thing. Recently, a private postal and courier services, has been introduced on a very large scale. It is being operated by some private parties. No doubt, they are giving prompt and reliable service. But question is as to whether it is legal. If it is illegal, what has the Government done about it? What is its policy? There is an Angaria Service which is already in operation in Bombay. I want to know what is the Government's policy about it.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA:

Sir, the private courier service is not allowed to handle letters. They are, however, allowed to handle parcels. Other agencies can also handle parcels. So far as letters are concerned, it is the responsibility, right and privilege of the Postal Department to handle them. Some instances of Angadias and others carrying on letters also have come to our notice. We have been vigilant in this respect. Some prosecutions have also been launched. But the modern development of courier service mainly concentrates on parcels and documents and other things. And it is to meet that challenge in a way that we are introducing these things so that we can give an assured and speedy service to people in our country as well as abroad.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA : Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned in his reply that special charge will be levied in addition to the normal charge. I want to know what the special charge will be for. It is not mentioned in the reply. And we understand that there will be an

extra charge of Rs. 10 up to 500 KMs and Rs. 20 for above 500 KMs for inland service. I think, this is a little on the higher side. I hope the Government will keep it at a moderate level so that ordinary people can also take advantage of it. I want to know what the charges will be.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA : Sir, the charges mentioned by the hon. Member are correct. A special speed postal charge at the following rates will be payable on 3 or 4 articles: (i; Rs. 10 for a distance up to 500 KMs per item. And for parcels, there is a different additional charge, etc. etc. We have publicised it and it will be known to everybody. Sir, this rate that we imposed is much less than what the private couriers are having. So, on an experimental measure, we have introduced this..

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: They have brought it down.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA; Still, Sir, it is much higher than what we have introduced. And since we have to provide a lot of special infrastructure by way of vehicles, by way of staff to handle it right from the place it is received or posted, I thought the charge that we levied is reasonable.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN : Sir a report has come and it is published in the newspapers through advertisements that a private company called the Skypack have been allowed to run this postal system. And they are advertising in the newspapers. Not only that, Sir. They have entered into an agreement with the Vayudoot and they have hired four Vayudoot aircrafts also for flying the mails to Nagpur and distributing the mails from Nagpur to' elsewhere. I would like to know from the hon. Minister why this privatisation of the Postal Services in this way which was so long, since the inception of the Postal

Department, handled by the Postal Department itself, the Government agency itself. Now, why has it been handed over to a private agency? I would like to know further, Sir, that if the Government actually wants that the mail should reach the people quickly, whether the Government is thinking of the revival of the scheme of re-introducing the express mail service that was there earlier or some other schemes through the Postal Department itself instead of handing over it to the private, agencies like the Skypack.

SHRI RAM NJ<sup>^</sup>ASMIRDHA:

It is not correct<sup>^</sup> Si that we have given the<sup>'</sup> postal

or any other service \*» "»' Skypack. The Skypack is VZtt one of the private couriers which the hon. Member mentioned. We have nothing to do with them. We have no agreement of any sort with them. And this impression has been created. And we do not know on what basis. It is like any other private service that this arrangement with the Vayudoot to lift certain articles of theirs on a commercial basis. We have nothing to do with that. But I can categorically state that there is no question of our handing over our services to the Skypack or any other organisation of that nature.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN : Sir, there is considerable delay in the delivery of letters, parcels and others usually sent by our post offices and that is the reason why private courier service is flourishing. May I know whether the hon. Minister has got any way of seeing that all these letters and others go faster so that this private courier service will not be resorted to by the businessmen and others?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, the hon. Member's point is very well taken namely, that we should improve our service to the extent that neither private couriers are required to operate, nor we are forced to introduce special services of this

nature. We are constantly endeavouring to improve our service but there are certain bottlenecks which have to be sorted out. We have introduced this special service on an experimental basis, which is to meet the competition from the private couriers, which have sprung up in a big way. And, Sir, I can mention on this occasion that we have consulted the staff at every stage before introducing this scheme and they are fully co-operating with us because the prestige of the postal service is at stake and the new service which we are introducing should be more successful than the private courier service.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL

MATTO : Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister. Srinagar (Kashmir) is not included in the scheme at present. But, right now the situation is that, you must have heard in the morning radio also, even in summer the road is blocked between Jammu and Srinagar and so we are exclusively depending upon the air traffic, particularly for postal services. Now, in the context of this postal service, I hope the Minister will inform us that such of the places as are far from the capitals shall also be included and the 500 k.m. bar that has been put, of course between Srinagar and Delhi it may be 600 or 700 k.ms., will not be enforced. Similar is the position in the North-Eastern States. Will the Minister give us an assurance that when he considers the introduction of this scheme for places other than the three cities which he mentioned, he will take into consideration the topographical position and geographical considerations and increase the mileage for this purpose and reduce the rates also?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, we have introduced this service, the international speed postal service in seven cities, namely, Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad. The international speed post is available

for four metro cities of Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. As I have said, we are just going to introduce it on an experimental basis. A lot of infrastructure has to be created by way of staff, vehicles, etc. and after this experiment proves successful we will review it and try to extend it to other cities.

SHRI MURASOLI MARAN: Sir, we all appreciate hon. Minister's efforts to create speed postal service. But, Sir, I want to point out that the department has given up some efficiency oriented schemes as a result of which a lot of delay is taking place. Sir, as we all know during 1954, Mr. Rafi Ahmed Kid-wai, when he was the Minister for Communications, he introduced the First Glass Mail service. Because of that scheme, the mail was given air-lift, and later on the night air mail service was introduced. S'r, slowly these methods were given up. For example, till 1981 all letters were subject to a delay of about hours. Sir, since 1982 the P&T Department, in the name of reorganisation and economy has created such changes that now letters take about 7 to 10 days to reach. For example, Sir, we all know that there used to be red vans in all the trains, in the important and fast trains, called the R.M.S. Sorting. That has been completely stopped now. It has now concentrated on stationary RMS mail offices resulting in enormous delay. Secondly, Sir, they have now created the district pattern and State pattern of sorting which causes a lot of delay. For example, though Faridabad is very close to Agra, yet letters posted in Agra for Faridabad are sent to Kohtak, since Faridabad lies in Haryana. Likewise letters posted at Guttack or Bhubaneswar for Vijayawada, which is on the trunk route between Bhubaneswar and Madras are being sent to Hyderabad because Vijawada is in Andhra. This is because of the new district pattern, and State pattern sorting and abolition of RMS, the railway sorting service. Because of

these things now about 16 thousand Glass III and 8 thousand Glass IV employees are going to be rendered surplus. Therefore, may I ask the Hon. Minister whether he will consider the reintroduction of these efficiency-oriented schemes, so that they may help speed postal services. Moreover, regarding the privatisation, the mail motor services, which is called the MMS, it is gradually being handed over to private contractors. Will he see that this kind of privatisation is stopped?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA.-It was after a Very great thought and survey by various committees, and examination at various levels, that sorting in trains was stopped; the main reason being that trains have become much faster than they used to be and they do not stop at every station as they used to; and there is tendency to make even the present trains faster, with the result that time available for sorting was not sufficient to sort out letters. That was very thoroughly gone into during the last few years and this decision was taken as a result of that study.

As regards delays after the abolition of the service, we are constantly reviewing the situation and I can-assure the hon. Members that mere abolition of the service would not result in delays because sorting would be done not necessarily at the district headquarters but at transport centres where the mail car be distributed to neighbouring areas.

As regards night air mail service, it was stopped because Indian Airlines stopped it. Now Vayudoot has offered us Dornier night service and we are entering into contract with them and will use that night service to the extent possible to speed up this service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.