

RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 22nd November, 1983/ 1
Agrahayana 1905 (Saka)

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

MEMBER SWORN

SHRI SHAMIM AHMED SIDDIQUE
(Delhi)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Seizure of Baggage of Officials who accompanied the Prime Minister on her recent U. S. Tour

*101. SHRI HARISHANKAR BHABHRA:†
SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the Press report which appeared in the 'Indian Express' dated the 12th October, 1983 to the effect that baggage valued at several lakhs of rupees, of the 18 top Government official who accompanied the Prime Minister on her recent tour to the United States, was detained by the Customs authorities at the Delhi Airport;

(b) if so, the dates on which the baggage was detained and the full payment of duty made;

(c) the names of the items, the value thereof and the amount of duty paid thereon;

(d) whether they declared their baggage; if not, what action was taken against them and what are the names of the items detained and still unclaimed, alongwith their value; and

(e) what are the names and designations of the officers who brought such baggage and what are their sources of foreign exchange?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PATABHI RAMA RAO): (a) to (e) A

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Harishankar Bhabhra.

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statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The Press report which appeared in the "Indian Express" of the 12th October, 1983 had come to Government's notice; and a clarification explaining the facts was issued on the same day, a copy of which is annexed.

Fourteen of the passengers on this special flight (one of whom had also carried the unaccompanied baggage of another passenger, who was due to arrive separately later) did not clear their dutiable baggage on the spot and left it with the Customs for subsequent clearance for which, in accordance with the usual procedure, detention receipts were issued to them on 4-10-1983. This baggage included such items as video cassette recorders, radio cassette recorders, colour T. Vs., Cameras and a fire arm of an aggregate value of about Rs. 1,38,000.

Ten of these passengers have since cleared the dutiable baggage left over by them, wholly or partly, on different dates, on payment of appropriate duty. The amount of duty recovered on the baggage since cleared by these 10 passengers, comes to about Rs. 86,000. In one case, I.T.C. fine was also recovered in addition to the duty leviable. The declared value of the baggage which is pending clearance comes to about Rs. 93,000.

The question of sources of foreign exchange of the passengers who had left their dutiable baggage with Customs for subsequent clearance and for which detention receipts were issued, will be looked into separately by the concerned authorities.

Annexure**Government Press note**

Reports appearing in a section of the Press that baggage of the Prime Minister's staff has been seized by the Palam Customs on the ground that there were contraband items valued at several lakhs or that there was an attempt at transporting this baggage directly from the runway to the homes of the passengers, are incorrect. There is also no basis in the report that