

श्री राजनारायण : सवाल यह नहीं है . . .

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO : I am sorry, the hon. Member must let me give the answer. . .

SHRI RAJNARAIN : You are not going to give any answer.

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO : I will try my best to give you the answer. I do not evade. I must tell the hon. Member that I am not in the habit of evading answers to questions. If I do not know, I will say that I do not know. I was saying that the University of Punjab, so far, has not represented to us that they are having any special difficulties because of the non-release of grants for the two quarters of the current year. We have requested the State Governments to release those grants. If we find that the Punjab University is in trouble and if the State Governments are not releasing the grants, obviously I will have to look into the matter.

ALL-WEATHER AIR SERVICE TO PORT BLAIR

*182. SHRI CHITTA BASU :†

SHRI DWIJENDRALAL SEN
GUPTA :

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to provide an all-weather air service from the mainland to Port Blair; and

(b) if so, what short-term and long-term measures Government have taken so far in this behalf ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION [DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI] : (a) Aircraft operate to such aerodromes only when weather conditions such as cloud base and visibility are above the prescribed minima. Port Blair aerodrome, although it has a tricky and short runway, is serviceable and remains open throughout the year. Indian Airlines, however, operate only when weather conditions are above the prescribed minima.

(b) A Radio beacon, a locator beacon and VOR facilities are provided. At present some of these function for restricted periods,

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Chitta Basu.

but they will soon be in operation for twenty four hours as soon as certain works in hand are completed.

SHRI CHITTA BASU : It has been admitted in the reply that there is no air service during the whole year between Port Blair and the mainland. There is air service only when the weather conditions are favourable. In view of the fact that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands need accelerated and integrated development, particularly for the successful implementation of the rehabilitation and resettlement programmes for displaced persons from East Pakistan and repatriates from Ceylon and Burma, will the hon. Minister see that immediate action is taken so that there may be all-the-year air services between Port Blair and the Indian mainland ?

DR. KARAN SINGH : It is not correct to say that there is not all the year round service. In the reply it has been said that when weather conditions are below the prescribed minima, at that time aircraft cannot operate. This is true as much for Delhi as for Srinagar or any other part of the country. We have said in the reply that radio beacon, locator beacon and VOR facilities are there. Some works are in hand which are likely to be completed very shortly. After that we hope that it will be possible for there to be less cancellations due to bad weather. It is impossible to give an assurance that they will always function because weather conditions are outside our control.

SHRI A. D. MANI : May I ask the Minister to tell us what is the passenger traffic in terms of numbers that the present service carries ? Is there any possibility of increasing the traffic ? May I ask the hon. Minister further what steps are being taken by the Government to develop the Andamans as a tourist resort ?

DR. KARAN SINGH : As far as the traffic is concerned, we have introduced recently a bi-weekly Viscount service. I have the figures with me. The load factor is fairly high, but yet it does not at this stage I think justify increase of service. Certainly we realise that for a place like the Andamans air link is a vital link. If the necessity arises, we will certainly keep in mind the possibility of increasing it. As far as the tourist aspect is concerned, I was wanting to visit the island myself. There is some

restriction at present, if I am correct, with regard to foreigners visiting. For our own people perhaps it might be a good idea to develop it, but this is a matter which I would like to look into and study.

SHRI N. R. MUNISWAMY : Our aircraft have to touch the Rangoon airport for refuelling. It is not only refuelling but we have got to get through other formalities like vaccination certificate and all that. May I request him to see that our planes do not touch Rangoon on their way to Port Blair?

DR. KARAN SINGH : The service started in 1960 with Dakota planes. They had to touch Rangoon before they went there. Then for two years, from 1966 to 1968, we ran the Skymaster service which is a four-engined turbo-prop plane. That was capable of flying through from Calcutta to Port Blair. Last year those Skymasters have been weeded out of the Indian Airlines fleet because they were uneconomical. We have therefore now had to revert to the Viscount, and the Viscount is not able to fly that long distance without refuelling at Rangoon. The only plane in our fleet at present which could fly non-stop is Caravelle, but the difficulty with Caravelle is that the airport at Port Blair is not long enough to take the Caravelle, and it is also questionable whether there will be enough passenger traffic. I appreciate the point made by the hon. Member. It is unfortunate that we have to go to our own territory through a foreign country, but as long as we are not given the necessary planes for this I am afraid there is no alternative.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI : Arising out of this question may I know whether there is any possibility of the Minister of Tourism undertaking a linking of minor places of tourist interest, particularly like Kolhapur and other centres so that a service can be had in this connection? (*Interruption*) Kolhapur is called the Southern Kasi. You do not know perhaps.

MR. CHAIRMAN : This question does not arise out of this question.

DR. KARAN SINGH : I am always willing to answer a question. Regarding Kolhapur I myself appreciate the importance of it. The question of air-linking Kolhapur is under consideration.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Sir, you will have noted that the hon. Minister said that

it is unfortunate that we arrive in Andamans by stopping in foreign territory, but there is nothing new in it. We are arriving at our Five Year Plan through American territory. I should like to know from the hon. Minister whether he has considered the advisability of appointing a Board to select the literature which should be put in our aircraft for the passengers. This matter we have raised again and again. I find arbitrarily the journals and literature are chosen in this matter, and that all kinds of things are there, whereas some important things in which a sensible man should be interested are not available to the passengers. I should like to know what the Government is going to do in this matter. Secondly, I should like to know this in this connection. The all-weather problem I can understand. But it seems, whatever the weather, it takes a longer time sometimes from the airport to the city office than the time taken from one airport to another airport; more time is taken than the flight time. I should like to know what steps the Government is taking to see that the passengers are carried in the transport, by the airways coach or whatever it is, expeditiously to the city office rather than the delay that is made.

DR. KARAN SINGH : This question is not directly related to the main question but I will certainly answer it. I will begin with saying that Shri Bhupesh Gupta is a senior parliamentarian, and therefore I will not be impertinent to cross swords with him with regard to the question of who is more committed to foreign involvement. I will not say that because I have great respect for him. I will not be impertinent to say that. As far as the aircraft literature is concerned

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SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Sir, on a point of order. I am very glad he has consideration for me, but I am not the Minister in charge of Civil Aviation.

MR. CHAIRMAN : And you have no consideration for others.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I have asked him that because he said it is unfortunate that we have to stop in a foreign country to go to another part of our country. Why is he upset about it?

DR. KARAN SINGH : I am not upset.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : You cannot even write your Five Year Plan unless the Americans told you how to write it.

DR. KARAN SINGH : Regarding the other two very interesting points the hon. Member has raised, the question of aircraft literature is one which comes up fairly often. There are several people who feel that certain types should be in order. I am not at the moment aware as to exactly how the journals are chosen the news papers are chosen. The language papers have written to me saying that there is no Bengali paper. I think you will find any Bengal paper when you fly from Calcutta to Delhi.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : No. Nothing.

DR. KARAN SINGH : These are matters which I will look into. May I suggest if any Member has a specific suggestion with regard to the type of literature, I would be very grateful if he could send it to me. The third point which he mentioned is correct. With the increase in the speed of aviation what is happening is it would be quicker, for example, to get from Delhi to Moscow or London, but it will take longer to get to the airport because of congestion. In Calcutta there is the highway that is being built. In Delhi the position is not too bad. Bombay is still a little difficult, but we will look into that.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : That is not the point. Your coach takes a lot of time to leave the airport.

DR. KARAN SINGH : It has to wait for the baggage. That is the reason.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Only the day before yesterday I was sitting in a coach with the baggage. The baggage got fed up. I also got fed up.

DR. KARAN SINGH : I am very sorry that the Member got fed up, but we will certainly try and see that this is expedited.

SHRI N. PATRA : May I know whether there is a demand by the people of Car Nicobar, one of the islands in the Andamans, about inter-island communication? The airstrip there is maintained by the Defence Ministry. Car Nicobar is a prosperous island. A delegation of Members of Parliament went there recently and they told them that they did not want any other thing from

the Government of India but they wanted that there should be at least inter-island communication. There is already an airstrip maintained by the Defence Ministry which can accommodate Viscounts or Caravelles. Why not meet the demand of the Car Nicobar people?

DR. KARAN SINGH : No such representation has yet come to my notice. Certainly I will look into it in consultation with the Home and Defence Ministries.

SHRI M. RUTHNASWAMY : May I ask the hon. Minister what are the tourist attractions in the Andamans?

DR. KARAN SINGH : I am very sorry. Andamans is one of the few places which I have not visited myself and I cannot really say about it. But I believe that it is very beautiful. There are lots of beaches and a lovely ocean scenery. That is all that I know about it.

†DEPARTMENTS TO SAFEGUARD INTERESTS OF MINORITIES

*87. **SHRI B. K. GAIKWAD :** Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether in pursuance of the deliberations of the National Integration Council at Srinagar during June 1968 there is any proposal under Government's consideration to set up separate departments at the Centre as well as in the States to safeguard the interests of minorities; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA) : (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

SHRI B. K. GAIKWAD : May I know whether it is a fact that the proposal was originally mooted by the Congress Working Committee some time ago and that the All India Congress Committee's Note on the communal situation in the country also suggested the creation of such a Department?

†Transferred from the 20th February, 1969.