

-public importance

Australia, U.A.R., Ceylon and Singapore.

(c) Does not arise.

12 .SOON

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED ADVICE GIVEN BY MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING TO UNCTAD DELEGATES AND FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS NOT TO TOUR SOUTH INDIA.

SHRI T. V. ANANDAN (Madras): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to the reported advice given by his Ministry to the delegates and foreign correspondents attending the UNCTAD session in New Delhi not to tour South India.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI NANDINI SATPATHY): Mr. Chairman, Sir, there is no truth whatever in the report published in the *Hindu* of Madras, on February 6, to the effect that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting discouraged visits to South India by delegates to UNCTAD and by foreign journalists covering the Conference. The financial approval for the press tours was received on January 30, 1968. On the same day, the Press Information Bureau sent out a circular to its officers in the Regional and Branch offices concerned which included Madras and Bangalore asking them to get in touch with the State Governments and authorities of the projects to be visited in order to make arrangements for the visits of the foreign journalists to various projects, transport, hotel accommodation, etc.

Foreign journalists started arriving in Delhi for the coverage of UNCTAD a few days before February 1, the

opening day of the Conference. On February 1, the Press Information Bureau issued a circular letter to the visiting foreign correspondents inviting them to join any one or more of the four weekend tours to various parts of the country, including South India. The letter was accompanied by the itinerary for each tour which included visits to agricultural and industrial development projects as well as places of historical interest.

On the same day, namely February 1, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting sent a communication to the Chief Secretaries of the State Governments concerned, including Madras and Mysore requesting them to extend all possible assistance to the Press Information Bureau in making the tours of the journalists a success. The suggestion was made that the Chief Secretaries might arrange meetings for the visiting foreign journalists with the Chief Ministers. Simultaneously details of the tour of journalists to Madras were finalised. How could in the face of these facts such a report be published in the *Hindu* on Feb. 6, passes one's comprehension. Had the New Delhi Office of the *Hindu* caied to check the facts with the Press Information Bureau, we are gure thai this misleading and mischievous report would not have been published, nor would the *Hindu* have commented editorially on the subject in the manner in which it did on Feb. 7. When the Press Information Bureau drew the attention of the *Hindu*, both in Madras and Delhi, to the incorrect report, the *Hindu* published on February 9 a report which only partially corrected the earlier story. The report published on February 9, said that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had turned down "strong suggestion to postpone the tour to the South". The fact is that no such suggestion was ever made either to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting from I any quarter or by anybody from the

[Shrimati Nandini Satpathy.] Ministry and the question of turning it down did not arise.

It is a pity that the already troubled situation in some parts of the country arising from linguistic and regional controversies should be exacerbated by incorrect newspaper reports of this nature.

I may inform the House that as many as 14 visiting foreign journalists representing nine European and Asian countries returned to Delhi from a four-day tour of South India on the evening of Feb. 13. In addition to visits to Integral Coach Factory, the Indian Telephone Industries, the Hindustan Machine Tools, etc., the journalists met the Chief Ministers of Madras and Mysore, members of the Madras Chamber of Commerce and local journalists. The Press Information Bureau also organised a road tour of journalists to Mahabalipuram and Pondicherry to enable them to have a view of the countryside and the places of historical interest.

SHRI A. D. MANI (Madhya Pradesh) : Sir, may I ask the Minister why financial sanction was taken for the tour only on the 30th of January? The hon. Deputy Minister has said just now that the foreign correspondents, had arrived a few days before the Conference and it was only after the financial sanction was obtained that the Press Information Bureau addressed the State Governments. Why was not all this thought of before? The Government of India had time to build a Rs. 2-crore hostel for them within a record time of eight months, yet the Government of India took a long time to approach the Finance Ministry for sanction. Why was there delay in approaching the Finance Ministry for sanction?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI K. K. SHAH): I do not understand how this question is connected with

this. The question is that we discouraged the foreign journalists from going to the South. And from the facts that have been given, my hon. friend ought to be convinced that not only on the 6th, but from the 1st February we have been arranging to send them to the South*. We have written letters to the foreign correspondents before the 6th of February, replies have been received between the 1st and the 6th of February. They were to leave on the 9th. But on the 9th U Thant came here and therefore it was postponed to the 10th. They went and returned on the 14th. Where does the question arise?

SHRI A. D. MANI: Sir, I seek your protection. My question arises from the statement made by the hon. Deputy Minister. She said that financial sanction was obtained on the 30th January. The Conference began two days later. Why was there so-much of delay in getting these tours properly sanctioned by the Finance Ministry because this might have acted as a deterrent to some of the people planning out a countrywide tour. That is a very relevant question.

SHRI K. K. SHAH: So long as I get the sanction on the 30th January, my work is done. They are not going before the 30th January, they are going after the 1st February. And so long as the sanction is received before the 1st February, my work is not hampered.

SHRI G. P. SOMASUNDARAM (Madras): Sir, only one question I have to ask. I want to know whether the intention of the rulers in Delhi is to project in foreign count-tries that India is only North India and people living in South India are uncivilised barbarians. The foreigners are always prevented from coming to the South; they are not given proper chances. Foreigners are coming to the North but they are not allowed to go to South India. They

are not given facilities to come to South India and to enable them to know the South directly. That is my only question.

AN HON. MEMBER: That he has clarified.

SHRI K. K. SHAH: Not only for the delegates but also for the journalists, I have arranged the tour myself.

SHRI MULKA GOVINDA REDDY (Mysore): Sir, has it come to the notice of the Government that in Mysore the students are on strike and the police have let loose violence and there is police raj in Mysore? There is breakdown of governmental machinery in Mysore.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How does that arise out of this?

SHRI MULKA GOVINDA REDDY: Did they not take this situation into consideration while sending these foreign delegates to South India, particularly to the Mysore State?

S'HRI K. K. SHAH: On the contrary, so far as we are concerned, we kn^w that in this country in spite of differences, where foreigners are concerned, they will be looked after very well in all parts of the country; we are not afraid.

SHRI R. T. PARTHASARATHY (Madras): The reply which the hon. Minister gave to the Calling Attention notice, I should say, is clearly convincing. But the Minister has not replied as to how the *Hindu* one of the leading journals in India, was able to get such information which the Minister said in his explanation was wrong ultimately . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Incorrect.

SHRI R. T. PARTHASARATHY: ... May I know how the Press Information Bureau supplied such wrong information to the *Hindu* correspondent at Delhi? If so, will the Minister be pleased to hold an enquiry into

the matter to find out how wrong information was supplied to the Madras journal?

SHRI K. K. SHAH: First of all the Press Information Bureau did not supply this information. The Press Information Bureau requested them to issue a corrigendum to correct the information. The *Hindu* is a very respectable newspaper. It is our great friend. But inscrutable are the ways. Sometimes such things do appear in many papers. However, we are helplessly trying to correct it. That is all I can say.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA (Bihar): Sir, the hon. Minister has rightly said that, the *Hindu* is a very, very important journal—in my opinion the most important English journal in India. Like God Almighty it never commits mistakes. Therefore, if something has appeared in it there must be some deliberateness about it. Therefore I would like to know from the Government whether these English newspapers, whether they are located in North India or in South India, have deliberately decided to break up this country by giving all sorts of false news and writings . . .

MISS M. L. MARY NAIDU (Andhra Pradesh): It is very incorrect -----

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA:... You are not the Chairman. Please keep quiet Sir, in view of this, may I know if the Government have realised that these English newspapers have to be guided in proper nationalistic channels? May I know if such matters would be brought to the notice of the Press Council of India by the Government because the Press Council is not there only to look after small matters. These are big matters, big issues which concern the integrity of this country. The English newspapers have deliberately decided to break up this country. Would the Minister bring it to the notice of the Press Council of India?

MISS M. L. MARY NAIDU: It is very wrong. It is only inviting the irritation of the English newspapers.

SHRI P. C. MITRA (Bihar): May I know, Sir, whether the hon. Minister has taken any steps to see that such misleading reports are not published? From the reply of the hon. Minister it appears that the true picture is revealed only when the question was put in Parliament. May I know, Sir, why the Government did not contradict this news through all the language newspapers before this news appeared.

SHRI K. K. SHAH: As I mentioned earlier, we asked them to publish the correction which has since appeared also. You can understand that. What more do you expect me to do? I have got to make further efforts to develop goodwill— That is all I can do.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH (West Bengal): May I know, Sir, how many UNCTAD delegates and journalists visited South India?

SHRI K. K. SHAH: Fourteen.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: And how many have travelled in North India?

SHRI K. K. SHAH: So far as delegates are concerned, many delegates have gone. So far as journalists are concerned, I have mentioned 14 journalists visited South India. We expected 5, 6 or 10 to go because there are four Zones. But for going to Madras there were as many as 14 and we had to make extra arrangements.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: How many visited Bengal?

SHRI K. K. SHAH: I have not got that figure. But the total is either 50 or 60. The fact is that 14 have gone to one Zone alone.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am allowing the Railway Minister to make a statement on a railway accident.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER Re AN INCIDENT IN WHICH SOME PERSONS WERE RUN OVER AT LUCKEESERAI STATION

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI ROHANLAL CHATURVEDI): Sir, it is with profound regret that I rise to make a statement on an unfortunate incident in which some persons were run over by train No. 12 Down Delhi-Howrah Express at Luckeeserai Station at about 22.12 hours last night i.e. 14-2-1968.

Due to Magh Poonima, pilgrims had gathered at various points along the Ganga to take bath. The Eastern Railway had arranged to run the following Mela specials for the benefit of the pilgrims:

- (1) From Danapur to Dildarnagar.
- (2) From Patna to Jahanabad.
- (3) From Barauni to Semaria.
- (4) From Danapur to Arrah.
- (5) From Kiul to Sheikhpura.

While the Mela special from Kiul to Sheikhpura station was coming to Luckeeserai where it reached at 22-14 hours, a lot of people from the down side rushed across the down main line to reach the Mela special coming on the up line. Meanwhile No. 12 down Delhi-Howrah Express ran through Luckeeserai at 22-12 hours. In this process 29 persons were run over by the Delhi-Howrah Express of whom 13 persons died on the spot and 3 died subsequently in the Luckeeserai block hospital. Another 13 persons were injured of whom 4 are suspected to have sustained serious injuries. Eight injured persons have been taken to the Railway Hospital by the Kiul Medical Relief van and 5 persons have been admitted in the Luckeeserai block hospital.

The Minister of State for Railways accompanied by Member (Engineering) and Director (Safety and Coaching), Railway Board, has flown in the night of the accident.