

STATEMENT BY MINISTER RE  
DEMAND FOR PUNJABI SUBA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is natural for the House to be concerned about the recent development arising from Sant Fateh Singh's intention to fast from September 10 to achieve Punjabi Suba and to immolate himself on September 25, if it was not conceded by then and also from Master Tara Singh's repeated demand for an "independent and self-determined status within the Indian Union".

I have already laid on the Table of the House the record note of Prime Minister's talks with Sant Fateh Singh. As has been made clear by the Prime Minister, both during his talks with Sant Fateh Singh and in his speech in Rajya Sabha on August 24, no efforts would be spared by Government to remove the sense of grievance from the mind of Sant Fateh Singh in regard to the language question and the functioning of regional committee. The Prime Minister had also assured Sant Fateh Singh that the question regarding the regional formula, sacrilege cases, amendment of the Gurudwara Act and other points would be looked into and that if there was any shortcoming or deficiency, he would see to it that things were put right. The Government is also prepared to associate Sant Fateh Singh's representative with any inquiry that may be instituted or with any other step that may be taken to remove his complaints.

It may be recalled that in recent years, several steps have been taken to arrive at an amicable arrangement for meeting the needs of the Punjabi speaking region and the Hindi-speaking region of the Punjab State. Controversy over the reorganisation of the Punjab State was, it was thought, laid to rest in 1956, when the Government of India evolve the Regional Committee scheme in consul-

tation with the Akalis. The demand for a Punjabi-speaking State was, however, taken up again and on this issue Sant Fateh Singh entered upon an indefinite fast on the 18th December, 1960. The late Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, made a statement on the 8th January, 1961, in the course of which he declared, "The Punjab itself is, broadly speaking, a Punjabi Suba as it is, with Punjabi as the dominant language there. It is true that some parts of the Punjab have Hindi, but essentially Punjabi is the dominant language and it should be encouraged in every way."

Sant Fateh Singh gave up his fast on receiving the following telegram from Master Tara Singh:

"Am satisfied with today's speech of the Prime Minister at Sardarnagar. Request you to break your fast. It fulfils the requirements of your vow."

The agitation was then withdrawn.

The demand for a Punjabi Suba has now been revived by Sant Fateh Singh. It seems to stem mainly from a sense of dissatisfaction with the manner in which the previous undertakings have been implemented. The Prime Minister's assurance that effective steps will be taken for the redress of grievances and the full implementation of arrangements agreed upon earlier should meet the needs of the situation. Sant Fateh Singh, however, persists in the demand for the creation of the Punjabi Suba. I may submit that recourse to fasts and counter-fasts to exert pressure on the Government to accept or reject a demand should be avoided; otherwise, it will not be possible for Government to carry on normal administration and discharge its responsibilities to the people. A considerable element of the population in the Punjab insists that a separate State should be formed for the Punjabi-speaking area on the linguistic basis. There is also a considerable

section which is strongly opposed to the adoption of such a course. Strong sentiments of a section of the people have, however, to be given consideration.

The whole question can be examined afresh with an open mind. The Government would be prepared to have further talks on the subject. We may hope that a co-operative solution will be discovered based on goodwill and a reasoned approach. The final test of the good of the various sections in conformity with the national interest should prevail. In these discussions, all unresolved matters can be taken up. For this, an atmosphere of goodwill and amity should be created.

I would urge that the present is not the time for doing anything which may deflect the energy of the Government and the people from the task of facing the very serious threat to our security from across our borders. As the House is aware, our security forces are engaged in dealing with the armed infiltrators from Pakistan and attacks by Pakistani armed forces and we are facing a situation with very serious possibilities. Even now important developments are taking place. I hope the House will join me in an appeal to Sant Fateh Singh to give up the proposed action and to join in the mighty effort the country is putting forth for thwarting Pakistan's aggression and the preservation of the integrity and independence of India.

It is not necessary for me to say much about the stand of Master Tara Singh. No demand which impinges in any manner on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country can possibly be given any consideration. I am confident that all the people of India—and among them Sikhs have a notable and honoured place—will wholeheartedly endorse Government's views on this vital matter.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, I wish to ask one question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before you ask any questions, I would appeal to Members not to put questions that would cause embarrassment.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: As you know, we were all very concerned about it and our Party sent a delegation to meet the Prime Minister twice over this matter and we also sent our Party delegation to meet Sant Fateh Singh. It seems to us that the demand for reorganisation on a linguistic basis should be accepted in principle in the present situation and once that is done things will be clear. I do not see why it should not be accepted. Secondly, we have also appealed to Sant Fateh Singh to give up the proposal for fast and we have conveyed our appeal to him personally through a delegation of our Party. Now, therefore, this point is quite clear that we are all interested in finding a solution to the problem. Now, it is not enough to say, just it will not do to say, that the question was laid to rest in 1956, because in 1955 it was said that the question was laid to rest when the States were reconstituted, but in 1956 also we, from this side of the House, many of us, did stand for reorganisation of Punjab on a linguistic basis and we supported, on that principle, a Punjabi Suba. Therefore, the controversy remains. Now, the situation has reached a stage, I think in view of all that he has said, when it should be accepted. (Interruptions). It should be accepted in principle. Do not get upset . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr Gupta, I hope my appeal to you has not gone in vain.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I say that if you say that only I should support the Government, I cannot.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I do not want it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I support the Government in this connection in its appeal. We have also appealed. (Interruption).

SHRIMATI C. AMMANNA RAJA (Andhra Pradesh): No more speeches.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Please do not disturb me. I say this thing should be considered.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Uttar Pradesh): You put your question.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Why is the Government not accepting it.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA (Bihar): Sir, on a point of order. I have a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your point of order?

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA: I would invite your attention very respectfully to the relevant rules about statements made in the House. The rules are very clear and very explicit that when a statement is made no discussion shall be raised on that statement. I remember there were times about ten years back or till the time of the late Mavalankar, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, where the rules were similar, after a statement was made the matter ended there. No questions were put and no answers were given. Later on, unfortunately, a departure was made, a distinction was made, a distinction without difference between questions and answers and discussions, because when there are numerous questions and numerous answers, there is nothing to distinguish that from a discussion. That departure was made. Unfortunately that departure invaded this House also. Since our rules are explicit and clear on this point, even though there has been a departure in the past, in practice at least on matters of such great importance I will humbly request you not to allow questions and answers which are in the nature of discussions.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Mr. Chairman . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you want any clarification, please make it brief.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I want a clarification. Sir, I do not wish to generate any heat at all. I am not interested in generating any heat. All that I wanted is to know why instead of relating it to what happened in the past this is not at least accepted in principle. Then you proceed on to other matters and also appeal to Sant Fateh Singh to give up his fast. Why is that approach not there?

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : सभापति जी, जो अपील की गई है, हम उसमें साथ हैं। हम चाहेंगे संत फतेह सिंह इस संकट के समय भूख हड़ताल न करें। उनका जीवन अनमोल है और वह देश की रक्षा के काम में लाना चाहिये।

मैं एक छोटा सा स्पष्टीकरण जानना चाहता हूँ। क्या यह सच है कि सरकार पंजाब के पुनर्गठन के प्रश्न को, जिसमें पंजाबी सूबे की स्थापना का सवाल भी कायम है, एक इन्डिपेन्डेंट कमीशन को सौंपने के लिये तैयार थी, और क्या यह सच है कि संत फतेह सिंह और उनके साथियों ने इस सुझाव को स्वीकार नहीं किया ?

SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI: Sir, I am thankful to the Members who support me and say that no questions should be asked. However, some questions have been asked. I shall reply very briefly, and it is this. What has been stated in paragraph 6, that is the reply to Shri Bhupesh Gupta that the whole question can be examined afresh with an open mind. Nothing is ruled out. Any questions or unresolved matters can be discussed. We do not rule out discussion for coming to a settlement and finding a solution, on principle nothing is ruled out. Therefore, it means that there is an open mind for discussion. I think that should suffice.

DR. ANUP SINGH (Punjab): I think there can be no two opinions about the request to Santji to abandon his fast. I do not think there is any disagreement. However, this

issue is of such a grave nature not only for the Sikhs and the Hindus but the country at large, so will the Government be prepared to have a discussion on this statement? I think that would only be appropriate. Then we can all express our views, not now but some time later; some time may be set aside for a discussion.

SHRI FARIDUL HAQ ANSARI (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, I do not know how far I am correct or my memory supports me, but I read in some papers either in the statement of Sant Fateh Singh or in one of the letters that he wrote to somebody that he wanted only the Government to accept the principle of a Punjabi Suba. Is that correct or wrong?

SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI: What ever it may be, as I said we are open for discussion and for resolving all unsettled matters.

SHRI A. D. MANI (Madhya Pradesh): Sir, may I respectfully suggest that the House endorses wholeheartedly without any dissenting opinion the statement and the appeal made by the Minister of State? Whatever points you wanted to discuss there is going to be a meeting.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: It should be accepted in principle.

SHRI A. D. MANI: We wholeheartedly appeal that he should end his fast and there should be no further discussion on this matter.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: No, Sir.

DR. GOPAL SINGH (Nominated): Sir, we are all at one with the appeal the Minister of State for Home Affairs has made to Sant Fateh Singh, but I would like clarification on one point. He has repeated the assurance of the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that Punjabi is the dominant language of the State. Do I understand from his statement that Punjabi will have the same status at the State level in Punjab as other languages in other States? That is one. Second-

ly, why is it that option has been given to people with Punjabi as their mother tongue to declare any other language as their mother tongue? This has been an act of discrimination. Will Government therefore rectify this mistake?

SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI: As I said, these are all questions which can be considered. But they can be considered in a cool atmosphere and not at a time when the country is facing aggression. All these matters can be discussed, can be resolved.

DR. GOPAL SINGH: What is the meaning of dominant language?

SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI: These things cannot be replied in that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We shall pass on to the next item.

#### THE WAREHOUSING CORPORATIONS (SUPPLEMENTARY) BILL, 1964—continued

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI D. R. CHAVAN): Sir, the other day I was replying to the points that were made by the hon. Member, Mr. Ruthnaswamy. Two points I had already replied to. Only one point remains. He made a reference in his speech to inadequate warehousing capacity in Madras and Madurai. Actually, as a matter of fact, Sir, in Madras we have just put up one centre in Chromepet with a capacity of 50,000 tonnes and in Madurai another centre with a capacity of 3,000 tonnes.

Then, Sir, I pass on to certain other points which were made by hon. Members. The hon. Member from Kerala, Shri Govindan Nair, complained that the very purpose of helping the tobacco growers has been defeated due to the delay in passing this Bill. Actually, as a matter of fact, this Bill was passed in Lok Sabha on the 27th November, 1964.