

SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI (Gujarat) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN) : Okay, I agree with you. I hope the Government will take note of it.

### **Sufferings of travellers due to cancellation of Air India Flights**

SHRIMATI VASANTHI STANLEY (Tamil Nadu) : Thank you, Sir. My Zero Hour mention today is on the important subject of 'sufferings of the travelling public due to cancellation of Air India flights'. The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi ji, said the customer is our God. But the Government, without any notice to the travelling public, has cancelled all the international flights. This has resulted in lots and lots of sufferings to the travelling public.

Great inconvenience has been caused to passengers. Passengers wait for hours but nobody gives them any information. Neither food facility nor accommodation facility is given to them. Air India failed to make any alternate arrangements for passengers. Air India flies to Europe, the US and Canada. All the flights have been cancelled. Over 50 flights were cancelled since the pilots suddenly reported sick. The airline operates 16 international flights a day with large, wide-body aircraft to the US, Europe, the Far East and South-East Asia. All the sectors are affected by the agitation of a section of pilots. Flights to London, Paris, Frankfurt, New York, Toronto, Shanghai and cities in the Gulf region were also affected.

On Sunday, it was reported that the Mumbai Airport's International Terminal had passengers waiting to be accommodated on other flights or waiting to hear about the status of their flights. Angry passengers tried to block the road outside the Mumbai Airport because they were frustrated with the lack of information given to them by Air India officials. Some of them were waiting for three-four hours without proper information. There was another testimony of a passenger in tears, whose last date of joining duty had lapsed. He exhausted all the money that he had brought for his day-to-day expenses while waiting at the airport. The expenditure includes cost of a bottle of water which is being sold at more than Rs.50 there. This happens after the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines! There is a disparity in giving promotion to the employees of these airlines. No employee should be placed at a disadvantage at any stage and no unilateral decision relating to service matters be forced upon the employees. The IPG is aware of its responsibility towards the travelling public. They have worked for more than four months without salary. It is surprising that though the pilots were ready for talks, the management was not prepared for it. It sacked them without any notice. It preferred sacking without giving them any notice. Considering the just demands of the pilots and considering the sufferings of the travelling public, I hope the Ministry will rise to the occasion and see to it that all the problems are solved. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA (Odisha) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI ANANDA BHASKAR RAPOLU (Andhra Pradesh) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI HUSAIN DALWAI (Maharashtra) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI P. BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI D. RAJA (Tamil Nadu) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

DR. ASHOK S. GANGULY (Nominated) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV (Bihar) : Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN) : All the hon. Members are associating themselves with it.

#### **Reported clash between officers and jawans of artillery unit in Ladakh**

DR. BHARATKUMAR RAUT (Maharashtra) : Sir, I rise to express grave concern over something that happened last week at Leh, which is India's border area. It was reported and I only hope that the newspaper report would be false. But that did not happen. Four days have passed. So far, the Defence Ministry has not contradicted that. The report is that at Leh, Indian Army Officers and *Jawans* clashed with each other. It was not just a clash. Colonel Prasad Kadam, Commanding Officer of the 226 Field Regiment, was admitted to a hospital. Ultimately, the artillery unit on the border had to be disarmed. The arms of *jawans* were taken away from their possession. They remained without arms for three days. It is a matter of grave concern. I can understand there must be some problem. We are proud of our Army because it is a disciplined force. If indiscipline on the part of *our jawans* and officers like this takes place on our border areas, I, as a citizen, feel insecure. If they are fighting with each other, how would they protect me?

Sir, here, I am not blaming either the *jawans* or the officers. What I want to say is that the Defence Minister, the Defence Ministry, the *babus* in the Defence Ministry or the senior Army Officers should take immediate cognizance of what has gone wrong and take appropriate measures. You should see what is their plight when they are in this type of situation. We must understand their plight and resolve their issues because