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Title: The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Information and Broadcasting laid a statement regarding Azadi Express.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to lay a Statement on the 'Azadi Express' and the public response to it at different stations during the course of its journey which is mentioned against my name and listed in the Supplementary List of Business today.

I would like to thank the hon. Railway Minister Shri Lalu ji to have organized this train to travel throughout the country with the execution of the Ministry depicting the entire struggle of 1857 and till 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. It has received the response of millions of students throughout the country....(*Interruptions*)

#### \*THE PROJECT

2007 is a memorable year for our nation. This year, the nation is celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup>

Year of First War of Indian Independence, 1857 and 60<sup>th</sup> Year of Indian Independence. A National Committee under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh and a National Implementation Committee under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Human Resource Development Minister Shri Arjun Singh have chalked a host of programmes to celebrate this auspicious occasion. As part of the celebration a Special Mobile Exhibition on Train was conceptualized to inspire the countrymen in general and youth in particular with the spirit of our glorious freedom struggle and the selfless sacrifice of our freedom fighters and also of the pioneering achievements of the last 60 years. M/o Information & Broadcasting has been made responsible to implement the project in collaboration with M/O Culture and M/O Railways.

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\*â€¦..\* This part of the speech was laid on the Table and also placed in Library, See No. LT 7786/2007

#### **CONTENT**

\_The 12 coaches of the Mobile Train depict the saga of popular upsurge leading to the first war of independence 1857, the role of nationalist leaders and thinkers in the fight against colonial rule and important events leading to achievements of freedom in 1947, and a journey through post 1947 development

Coach 1 depicts the pre-1857 golden era.

Coach 2-4 are about the 1857 First War of independence.

Coach 5-7 advent of Gandhiji in the freedom movement leading to 1947.

Coach 8-10 depict resurgent India and march to progress.

Coach 11 is about development of parliamentary democracy.

Coach 12 has a souvenir shop.

#### **COST**

The total cost of the project was estimated originally at Rs 14.84 cr. However, Ministry

of Railways has granted concession of their operational cost by 50% keeping in view the important national objective envisaged by the project. The sanctioned project cost is Rs 9.27 cr as on date.

## **THE FLAG OFF**

On the birth centenary day of one of the noblest sons of India Shaheed Bhagat Singhji,

i.e. 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007, the Special Mobile Train Exhibition, aptly named 'Azadi Express' was flagged off by Hon'ble Human Resource Development Minister Shri Arjun Singh from Safdarjung Railway Station, New Delhi.

## **ITINERARY**

Over a period of eight months the 'Azadi Express' will travel to 21 states halting at 70

major stations. The 'Azadi Express' is scheduled to come back to Delhi on 11.05.2008 after concluding its historical journey.

## **STATES/PLACES COVERED**

Till date, the Exhibition has covered 20 major places namely Safdarjung station (New

Delhi), Porbandar, Sabarmati, Vadodara, Daurai(Ajmer), Gandhinagar(Jaipur), Lalgah(Bikaner), Amritsar, Pathankot, Jammu Tawi, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Roorkee, Sahibabad, Agra Cantonment, Gwaiior, Jhansi, Bhopal, Raipur and Nagpur covering nine states viz. Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttaranchal, part of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and parts of Maharashtra,

## **RESPONSES OF THE PEOPLE Gujarat**

After flag off, the Train went straight to Gandhiji's Janambhoomi Porbander and

Karambhoomi Sabarmati. The response of the people was so tremendous that they remained in long queue waiting for their turn to enter the train. Some of the members of the family of Father of the Nation also visited the exhibition. **More than 4.5 lakh people including large number of school children visited the exhibition. At Porbandar,** the exhibition was opened for public viewing with a prayer session by school children followed by a skit on Mahatma Gandhi. Song and Drama division organized a programme on the occasion, All India Radio Rajkot presented Gandhi bhajans on Gandhi Jayanti day and prominent local families connected with Gandhiji and members of Kirti Mandir trust visited the exhibition. **More than 2.5 lakh visitors visited the Azadi Express during its 3 days stay at Porbandar.**

**At Sabarmati, nearly 2 lakh visitors saw the exhibition.** Election Commissioner Shri S.Y. Qureshi visited the exhibition.

**At Vadodara,** freedom fighters who participated in Quit India Movement were felicitated when they visited the exhibition. Hon'ble MOS Railways Shri V.J. Rathwa visited exhibition and appreciated it.

## **Rajasthan**

In Rajasthan too, the response was overwhelming. **Here also more than 4 lakh people visited the exhibition including a large number of school children and veteran freedom fighters.**

**At Jaipur** noted freedom fighters, Mrs. Narangi Devi and Mr. Champalal Ranka were the distinguished dignitaries to board the train first on the opening day of the exhibition. DFP unit at Jaipur organized quiz competitions among visiting school children at Daurai and Jaipur. **Over 2 lakh people visited the exhibition in Jaipur.**

**At Lalgah (Bikaner), more than one lakh people visited the exhibition with appreciation from one and all.** The response was so tremendous that opinion makers like Mr. Bulaki Das, MLA wrote in visitors book that the Mobile Exhibition inspires the new generation and it should be taken even to tehsil level. Visitors from Bikaner expressed the opinion that it was a beautiful attempt to unite the entire country.

## **Punjab**

In spite of the Dussehra festival, the response in Punjab was equally good. At

Pathankot a large number of families of Jawans visited the exhibition. **More than one lakh people visited the exhibition in Punjab. At Amritsar,** Song and Drama division organized a programme on the patriotic theme on the opening day while the Punjab Police Band enthralled the crowds on the closing day of the exhibition.

### **Chandigarh**

**At Chandigarh** during its halt from 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. to 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 07, large crowds of school students visited the exhibition. On the opening day, Punjab Deputy Speaker Hon'ble Sat Pal Gosain complemented the authorities for organizing such an informative exhibition which he said should be taken to every corner of the country to educate the masses. **The Mobile Exhibition was visited by more than one lakh thirty thousand people at Chandigarh.**

### **Jammu & Kashmir**

The exhibition was welcomed with fanfare and festivities in Jammu & Kashmir. State Government organized a cultural bonanza befitting with the theme of the exhibition. **Around one lakh people visited the exhibition in J&K.**

**The train halt at Jammu Tawi Railway station from 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 07.** The Academy of Culture, Jammu and Kashmir organized multi media cultural events in the city coinciding with the arrival of Azadi Express there. Music and folk dance events were organized depicting the Jammu region on the first day in the presence of Hon'ble Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Gulam Nabi Azad accompanied by Min. of State for Industries, Shri Romesh Sharma and some other prominent leaders visited the exhibition on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct. 07. Children from large number of schools visited the exhibition during its 3-day halt and evinced keen interest in the multi media exhibits.

### **Uttaranchal and part of UP**

The response was so positive in Uttaranchal and UP that in couple of places the

opening time of the exhibition had to be pre-poned and extended beyond scheduled closing time. **More than 2 lakh people visited the train in Uttaranchal and parts of UP. At Dehradun and Roorkee** prominent freedom fighters including Narayan Singh Negi and Dhruv Singh Thapa visited the exhibition on the opening day. The closing time had to be extended in view of heavy rush. **At Roorkee,** local coordinators decorated the Mobile Exhibition Train - Azadi Express in Deepavali festive mood on the eve of Diwali festival. **The Exhibition was watched by over 50,000 viewers. At Sahibabad,** there was heavy public response, children from 27 schools visited the exhibition in groups. At one time, the queue was over 300mtrs. long. **More than 50,000 visitors saw the exhibition.**

**At Agra Cantt.** A Veteran freedom fighter Raja Rajendra Singh was the first entrant to the exhibition. He is descendant of Raja Mahendra Singh, a freedom fighter of 1857. The exhibition had to be opened earlier than the schedule time because of the heavy rush on 2<sup>nd</sup> day of its halt on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 07. DFP unit organized quiz contest for the students at the Railway platform. **Students from more than 20 schools were among about 50,000 visitors on the final day at Agra Cantt.**

### **Madhya Pardesh & Chattisgarh**

In all the places of MP and Chattisgarh there was fantastic response from general public, students, youth and freedom fighters. **More than 3 lakh people visited the exhibition in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. At Gwalior,** there was overwhelming response from schools and colleges. **Nearly 65 Govt, and Private school children were among about 50,000 people who visited the exhibition on 20.11.07, the final day of its halt.** Several local leaders and freedom fighters visited the exhibition.

**At Raipur,** on the opening day, Rotary club of Raipur organized a programme at adjacent railway platform coinciding with the Mobile Exhibition. **State Chief Minister, Home Minister and some other ministers and other leaders visited the exhibition and evinced keen interest.** As on today the Train is in **Maharashtra.** It has received unprecedented response in Nagpur. On the opening day, **at Nagpur,** local freedom fighters came out in a big procession accompanied by a musical lazium dance by school students to the beating of drums. It was a great festivity by non-political freedom fighters who were highly appreciative of the Government of India for organizing and bringing such an exhibition to

their city. All India Radio Nagpur put out one hour live programme on reactions from the public. to the Mobile Train on the opening day of the exhibition at Nagpur on 1.12.07.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it seems, the very objective of Mobile Train Exhibition Project to enthuse the youth of India with a sense of passion for the motherland is getting early success.

MR. SPEAKER: Please wait. Shri Arjun Sethi, your's is not the only issue in the country. Please take your seat. I will call you according to the list.

[R21]SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, may I submit this if you permit me for half-a-minute?...(*Interruptions*)

Today is a very important day. The Order Paper today shows that we have to discuss the Internal Security issue. I am to submit, through you, Sir, to the House that because of your guidance and the cooperation of the entire House, we have been able to pass important legislations. Today, there are three legislations. We have to pass them. One of which, I have to take to the Rajya Sabha tomorrow because tomorrow the Rajya Sabha can discuss it and day after tomorrow is the Private Members' day. Therefore, I will appeal to you, to cancel the recess or Lunch Hour, if possible today. We can continue the business. Again, at 2.30 p.m., we can take up the Internal Security issue.

My only appeal is this. The Bill of Shri A.K. Antony, which has been passed by the Rajya Sabha, has come to Lok Sabha. It can wait a little. But the Bill of Shrimati Meira Kumar is very important. It has to go to Rajya Sabha tomorrow. Therefore, it could get the priority before the Bill of Shri A.K. Antony. That is what I am requesting you and the House.

MR. SPEAKER: That will be taken up after finishing Item No.24.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY (PURI): Sir, everyday, we are canceling the Lunch Hour.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Doctors say these days that if you take a less quantity of lunch, health will be good....(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Let us get dispose of one of the matters before I come to the important matters. Item No.23 – Shri Lalu Prasad. You can move your Resolution.

**12.53 hrs.**