

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

## OFFICIAL REPORT

4035

### HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

*Monday, 5th April, 1954*

*The House met at Two of the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

3 P.M.

#### P.E.P.S.U. APPROPRIATION BILL

**Mr. Speaker:** I have to inform the House that the President has withheld his assent from the Patiala and East Punjab States Union Appropriation Bill, 1954, which was passed by both Houses of Parliament and presented to the President for his assent on the 8th March 1954. While returning the Bill, the Ministry of Law have stated that the proclamation issued under article 356 of the Constitution in respect of the Patiala and East Punjab States Union having been revoked by the President on the 7th March 1954, it was considered that the competence of Parliament to enact the Bill also had come to an end on that date, and that, thereafter, it might not be appropriate for the President to assent to the Bill, and thereby to give it the appearance of a valid law.

73 P.S.D.

4036

#### CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

#### TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS AT I.A.F. DISPLAY, TILPAT RANGE

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Defence (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): The House has naturally taken great interest in the traffic jam which occurred on the road from Delhi to Tilpat Range on March 28, 1954 on the occasion of the Air Force Display. Many questions on this subject have been addressed to Government. On that occasion, serious inconvenience was caused to large numbers of people, among whom were invited guests including Members of Parliament. Even the Air Marshal was held up in the traffic jam and reached the Tilpat Range towards the end of the Display. Many persons could not reach it at all. The Government wish to express their regret at this unfortunate and unexpected occurrence which caused so much inconvenience and discomfort.

The Government have enquired into this matter fully both from the point of view of finding out the reasons for this extraordinary traffic jam and with a view to preventing any such occurrence happening in future.

I am placing before the House a report of the enquiry made.

In December last the Government decided that the Indian Air Force should hold an Air Display and Fire Demonstration on the 28th March 1954 in connection with the celebration of the 21st Anniversary of the Indian Air Force. Tilpat Bombing Range,

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

which is about 17 miles from Delhi was chosen as the nearest convenient place for this demonstration. The Government in the Ministry of Defence sanctioned a sum of Rs. 32,000 for improving the ground at Tilpat and also the fair weather road between the main Delhi-Mathura Road and Tilpat Range.

From the inception of this project, the Government departments concerned, viz., the Air Headquarters, the Police and the Railways worked in the closest co-operation in regard to arrangements for this occasion. In addition, such organisation as the Delhi Transport Authority, Auto India and the Automobile Association of Upper India also co-operated in this effort. The widest publicity was given for this Display. Air Headquarters issued invitations to nearly 9,000 persons. A series of meetings were held between the representatives of the various departments and organisations referred to above from the middle of January onwards. On the 26th March a dress rehearsal was also held.

The division of work was roughly as follows:

While the Air Headquarters were in overall charge of the arrangements their detailed duties were confined to the arrangements at Tilpat Range. Arrangements for traffic regulations were in the hands of the Delhi Police up to the extent of the limits of Delhi State and thereafter under the Punjab Police. The strength of the Police force on duty in Delhi area on the 26th was 190, of whom 84 were concentrated on the one and a half mile stretch between Wellesley Road Crossing and the level crossing. A force of 561 had been lent to the Punjab Government for duty at and near Tilpat. The Delhi Transport Service undertook to run special services of buses from various points in Delhi to Tilpat Range. In addition, 100 Army Trucks were positioned at Meola Maharajpur siding near Faridabad Station to ply between the Station and the Canal. Two Bailey Bridges were specially constructed to permit

the crossing of the Canal by persons travelling on foot. The Railway Administration had made arrangements for running five special trains from New Delhi to a temporary halt between Tughlakabad and Faridabad.

Based on past experience of such occasions, the authorities in charge of the arrangements had reckoned that the number of persons that might undertake the journey to Tilpat on the 28th morning would not exceed 30,000 or 40,000. The number that actually undertook the journey has been estimated variously at figures ranging up to 300,000. The Railway Administration ran seven specials as against five, as originally planned, and the total bookings were 21,500, but, in addition to these, a large number of people travelled on the roofs and foot-boards of the railway coaches. The Delhi Transport Service that had undertaken to run 55 buses had, in fact, engaged 65 buses in carrying the public to the function. It is estimated that not less than 10,000 vehicles, including cars, trucks, buses, motorcycle rickshaws, tongas and motorcycles, endeavoured to make the journey to Tilpat over a road which cannot ordinarily take more than two vehicles abreast. Almost all who went by road used the main Delhi-Mathura Road. The Railway level-crossing on this road had to be closed periodically to permit the trains to pass. At the peak period of the journey to Tilpat Range, viz., between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m., the level-crossing gate had thus been closed for a period of over half an hour, though on each occasion, it had not been closed for more than four or five minutes. Very few took the alternative route *via* Okhla. A major contributing factor to the congestion and confusion was the breakdown of many automobiles owing to engine trouble or for some other reason, which led to stopping the flow of traffic. Another factor was the utter disregard of the ordinary traffic rules by many of the drivers of motor vehicles.

It must be remembered that in the great cities of Europe and America,

traffic jams and dislocation have become a great and continuing problem, in spite of every device and effort to remove this congestion. Even normally, in some congested areas, traffic is held up for long periods. On a special occasion, like a holiday exodus, there is often a traffic jam for hours. In Delhi there are relatively far fewer automobiles than in European or American cities. But the mixture of conveyances from motor cars to tongas and bicycles leads not only to greater confusion but a general slowing down of the pace of movement. On this occasion a great part of the vehicles of Delhi of various kinds concentrated on this single Delhi-Mathura road. The experience, for Delhi, was a novel one.

Apart from the congestion and blocks in the traffic, there has been criticism regarding the failure to arrange an adequate supply of drinking water *en route*, as it was not anticipated that there would be very serious dislocation or hold-up of traffic. At Tilpat Range itself, Air Headquarters had five Water Tank vehicles in readiness at five points with glasses to supply water from 8 a.m. Each tank had a capacity of 500 gallons and 2,500 gallons of water had thus been provided in the first instance. When this was exhausted at about 10 a.m. another 1,000 gallons of water were arranged in spite of the traffic jam. More supplies could not be arranged because of the difficulty of moving vehicles. There is a well available within 500 yards of the main public stand at Tilpat and large numbers of the public had used water from this well. Two large stands of aerated water had been opened at Tilpat Range. Each had more than 20 retailers to carry these bottles in all directions for sale. At the bus stand, at the meeting point of the bus service between the Railway Station and the Bailey Bridges, further provision of aerated water had been made. As a matter of interest, it is reported that 48,000 bottles of aerated waters were consumed.

Some damage to the fields was caused by the bombing and by some

military trucks. The principal damage, however, to these fields was due to the public invading them and removing the ripening gram which they consumed. The total damage at Tilpat, Wazirpur and Movai has been estimated roughly by the Deputy Commissioner, Gurgaon, as follows:—

By bombing	Rs. 831
By military trucks	Rs. 640
By the public	Rs. 5,945

**TOTAL Rs. 7,416**

This is a preliminary estimate. A fuller report has been called for. The Government propose to give compensation for the damage to the peasants concerned.

It will be observed that the various Ministries and Departments of Government had taken all the usual steps to organise the arrangements connected with this display in as efficient a manner as possible. There had been periodical consultation between the representatives of the various Departments concerned with a view to achieving co-ordination. The Air Display was the first of its kind in India, and all the calculations made about the number of people who were likely to attend were upset and a very much large number of persons then could have been anticipated actually travelled to Tilpat on the morning of the 28th. In order that dislocation and inconvenience are not caused in the future, the Government have decided that a Committee consisting of representatives of the Defence Ministry, Army Headquarters, the Police and the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, should consider the various problems relating to this matter. This Committee will consider the measures necessary for the regulation and improvement of traffic and other arrangements. In particular, they will consider the provision of an over-bridge at the level-crossing and also the construction of a by-pass road.

**Shri Bgawat (Ahmednagar South):** May I ask one question?

**Mr. Speaker:** No questions on this. This is a statement which has been made.