

and until 1977—nothing was done. He is now desirous that it should be time-barred. I have already said that we may do so. But I may say further that so far as Class-I and Class-II are concerned, first of all, there is no provision under the LIC Act that there should be representatives from officers and employees categories. But Government has taken a decision in this regard. So far as the Class-I and Class-II officers are concerned, a decision has been taken that a representative from each category would be taken on Board by rotation. But it was decided by the previous Government, the previous L.I.C. Board before we came in, that until the question of workers of Class-III and Class-IV representatives is decided upon, we shall not appoint Class-I representative. Now because they feel that it would not be expedient, I think we are now near the decision in regard to Class-III and Class-IV. I think this particular thing will soon be done.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA: From the reply given by the hon. Minister, it appears that there is not a single member from the LIC employees either from officer category or Class-III and Class-IV employees. May I know whether the Government in the meantime has decided the basis on which the representative will be taken or chosen from amongst the employees in the Board? If not, when are they going to do it?

SHRI H. M. PATEL: I have already given the answer to this that there will be one representative from Class-III and Class-IV employees and one from Class-I and Class-II officers. It is because we could not agree upon the way of selecting their representative.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA: How can they?

SHRI H. M. PATEL: Therefore, because it was not possible, now we have got them to agree that a secret

ballot would be taken amongst them and their representatives will be selected.

Alleged cheating of Tourists by Travel Agents

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*288. **DR. SAROJINI MAHISHI:**
SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:

Will the Minister of **TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that many travel agents in the country and the I.T.D.C. who are in league with the air lines, hotels, Curio shops and restaurants, run a racket of cheating tourists and maintain the biggest illicit source of foreign exchange for **keeping smugglers in business;**

(b) if so, whether any inquiry has been conducted; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to protect the tourists against such racketeers?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PURUSHOTTAM KAUSHIK): (a) and (b). The Department of Tourism has not received any complaint about collusion between I.T.D.C. and airlines, hotels, curio shops, restaurants. However, complaints are received from individual tourists, majority of which relate to shopping. Such complaints are investigated and processed through State Government, local authorities and respective Traders Associations.

(c) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

The following steps have been taken from time to time by the Department of Tourism to protect tourists:—

(i) A system of approving travel agents, tour operators, wild-life outfitters and tourist car

operators who fulfil certain minimum standards has been in existence over the past several years. Any complaints received against these recognised agencies is taken up and suitable action is taken.

- (ii) The Department has laid down certain criteria for various types of accommodation available in hotels which are categorised accordingly. The rates charged by hotels are approved by the Department of Tourism from year to year. The rates approved according to a formula keeping in view the facilities and comforts available in that hotel.
- (iii) The Department has a list of approved shops which is circulated to all tourists and they are advised to purchase souvenirs, curios, etc., only from these shops. Any complaints against these shops are investigated by the Department and if there are serious complaints, the names of these shops are removed from the approved list.
- (iv) A network of Tourist Offices in India and abroad has been opened by the Department of Tourism which assists tourists by way of information on hotels and other facilities, sightseeing tours, etc.
- (v) Tourist literature published by the Department gives information about the approved hotel rates, cheaper accommodation available in the tourist centres, sightseeing tours organised by the State Tourist Departments, Tourism Development Corporations and private agencies. The literature is distributed also through travel agencies, airlines and Embassies abroad.

(vi) To assist tourist on their first arrival in India, round the clock "welcome service" is available at the international airports in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras. Tourists can get information regarding hotels and taxi rates at these counters.

(vii) The Complaint Cell in the Department investigates any complaints received from tourists and takes action according to the regulations in existence.

(viii) Money Changer's licences have been issued by the Reserve Bank of India to hotels, restaurants and shops from whom tourists can change money besides scheduled banks.

DR. SARAJINI MAHISHI: Sir, I have gone through the Statement laid on the Table of the House. But I want to know whether it is done according to the criteria laid down. The General Sales Agents have been appointed in London and in India even though there are very big offices in those places and the Regional Director of Air India is advised not to appoint Sales Agents where there are booking offices.

SHRI PURUSHOTTAM KAUSHIK: General Sales Agent is appointed looking to the commercial interests and the Airlines have given due consideration to this aspect and also as there is a competition among the various International Airlines, that step was taken.

DR. SARAJINI MAHISHI: I do not know whether the House is satisfied with the reply given by the hon. Minister. In spite of the fact that there are big booking offices in those places, why General Sales Agents have been appointed and in the name of General Sales Agents, the commission is siphoned off. I would like the Government to give specific answer to this.

SHRI PURUSHOTTAM KAUSHIK:

Sir, these Sales Agents are not appointed after the assumption of this Government. They were appointed long back by the previous Government and now the question whether we could disturb them is to be considered and for that we will have to take into consideration the advice of the Undertakings. When I asked them on this point, they said that this would affect the business adversely. So, it is not that this Government has appointed the General Sales Agents. But I can look into the matter and I will discuss it with the Air India. This is all what I can say.

DR. SAROJINI MAHISHI: The hon. Minister should at least not defend for the appointment of the General Sales Agents. When there are big booking offices there, what is the use of appointing General Sales Agents?

MR. SPEAKER: I think, Madam, you were in charge of this at one time.

DR. SAROJINI MAHISHI: He should not at least defend the old ailments, if they continue to be there. They are not to be presumed to be cured. Moreover, in the Regional Air India Office in New York, Mr. Peter Matha, has acquired the American citizenship. But he is drawing his pay and allowances as India based officer. If these loopholes are there in the administration, how can you expect the Corporation to earn profit? Apart from this, the travel agents big hoteliers etc. offer baits and tempting offers to the highest level officers of the Corporation. I learn that the T.C.I. Clarke Shiraz and Taj Hotel have already appointed one of the top Air India officials within six months of his retirement as their General Representative in European countries. I would like to know how these things are going to be remedied.

SHRI PURUSHOTTAM KAUSHIK: So far as that officer is concerned, I will look into the matter. But so far

as the question of temptation given by the private hotels, we cannot check them.

SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:

Sir, the hon. Minister has replied only a part of the question. I am not concerned about the tourists coming to India from abroad. What about the tourists who go to other countries, especially persons going to Middle East countries. Persons who go to Dubai and other Middle East countries are charged Rs. 500 as reservation charge per ticket. I want to know whether any complaint has been received by the Minister to this effect and before giving licence to the travel agents whether their antecedents were verified. Whether any complaints against these travel agents have been received or not?

SHRI PURUSHOTTAM KAUSHIK:

I have no knowledge of such complaints. But if the hon. Member can oblige me by giving specific complaints, I will look into the matter and see that strict action is taken against the defaulters.

SHRI K. GOPAL: Sir, the Minister is getting away with the usual reply that he would look into the matter. I would like to know whether it is a fact that some top officials of Air India who are based in London and New York have floated companies as Travel Agents in the name of their wives and relations. When the people want to buy tickets, they are asked to go to the Travel Agents for the ticketing, so the commission goes to travel agents and not to the Air India Office. Whether there is any link with the big hotels in India so that the commissions that are accrued are siphoned off to them in the form of foreign exchange? The Government is not benefited by this. I am not only on the point that the travel agents who are in collusion with them but some of your employees, that is, Air India employees, are also indulging in this malpractice. Are you aware of it? If not, if you

want, I can send some specific complaints. What action have you taken so far?

SHRI PURUSHOTTAM KAUSHIK: Sir, I am not aware of such complaints having received. Again I repeat if the hon. Member would co-operate with me by giving specific instances, we can prevent them from doing such kind of practice. If an employee is there whose relations are running companies, we can look into this matter and see what action could be taken under the law. I can assure the House that we will not allow such practice to continue.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: The hon. Member Dr. Sarojini Mahishi was incharge of the Tourism Department at that time. She very rightly knows the facts and other things. She has put a very specific question, but, unfortunately, the hon. Minister has only stated that I have placed it on the Table of the House and not replied and replied evasively. You kindly go through part (a) of the question. She seeks your protection. In the interest of the Government, in the interest of the Ministry and in the interest of the country, I want to know from the hon. Minister.

MR. SPEAKER: You never put a question. You always make a speech.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: I know he is capable of taking the situation in a serious manner. He should give us information. The I.T.D.C. who are in league with the airlines, hotels, curio shops and restaurants, run a racket of cheating tourists and maintain the biggest illicit source of foreign exchange for keeping smugglers in business. For the last two years, it may be 1-1/2 years, there are certain smugglers from Bombay who are operating in other countries or in league with not only officers but the Indian Airlines and the top management. For the last 1 1/2 years these smugglers are operating

successfully in league with the top officials and the Indian Airlines and also in link with the private hotels in India.

MR. SPEAKER: What is your question? I will go to the next question, if you do not put a question.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: Thereby they are running a racket in the Department of tourism and siphoning of the money which is legitimately due to our country. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister would concede for an enquiry about all these allegations that we have made and see that such racket of smugglers is not operated in the Department of Tourism.

SHRI PURUSHOTTAM KAUSHIK: When such complaints are received action is taken. I may just inform the hon. Member that in 1977 one Sub-Inspector, who was involved in this foreign exchange racket, was suspended and he was dismissed from service. If complaints are received, action is taken.

Agreement with Sri Lanka regarding breaking the strangle hold of multinationals in tea trade

*289. **SHRI P. M. SAYEED:**

SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE, CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Sri Lanka have decided to join hands to break the age-old strangle hold of multinationals in the tea trade;

(b) if so, what steps will be taken by both the countries; and

(c) whether any agreement has been reached?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR GOYAL): (a) to (c). Joint cooperative