

Write up

**On the visit of Honourable Prime Minister of India
to Himachal Pradesh – District of Lahual-Spiti and
Kullu.**

Year 2000 to 2003.

By :

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Keylong visit of Prime Minister of India in June 2000 :-

I joined the State Civil Service which is called Himachal Pradesh Administrative Service (HPAS) in Himachal Pradesh in March 1996 and after completing my institutional and field training I was posted as Sub Divisional Magistrate of Ani Sub Division in Kullu district of Himachal in September 1998 and in the month of December 1998 I was transferred and posted as Project Officer Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) at Keylong in tribal and snow bound district of Lahual and Spiti with additional charge of Sub Divisional Magistrate of Udaipur Sub Division of the district from February, 1999 to May 2000 till regular incumbent joined there. I was also holding the additional charge of Sub Divisional Magistrate of Keylong Sub Division intermittently from January 1999 till new incumbent joined as the officer posted there was on leave for the maximum period of his posting due to some reasons. It was in the last week of May 2000 when the district administration of Lahual-Spiti district received a communication that the Honourable Prime Minister of India Sh. Atal Bihari Bajpayee is visiting Tabo Monastery in Spiti sub division of the district. The district of Lahaul-Spiti is snow bound and it is cut off from the rest of area of the State for six months due to heavy snow fall. The Lahual and Spiti areas are separated by Kunzam pass which is around 15000 Ft. high and the road which connects two areas was closed due to snow and it was to be open for vehicular traffic in the month of June/July. This district is the largest district of Himachal Pradesh comprising 24% of the total geographical area of the state but in case of population it is sparsely populated. The population at that time was around 32 thousand – 24 thousand in Lahual area and 8 thousand in Spiti area.

The Deputy Commissioner of the district was supposed to go to Spiti area to supervise the arrangements for the VVIP visit and the only way to reach there was by helicopter as the state government provides helicopter services to tribal snow bound areas in winter but it all depends on weather conditions and availability of helicopter. While the Deputy Commissioner was planning to move out to Spiti area, communication received that the ensuing visit of Honourable Prime Minister to Tabo Monastery is cancelled. The Deputy Commissioner heaved a sigh of relief but suddenly on 30th May 2000 a communication received that Honourable Prime Minister will visit Keylong on 3rd of June 2000 and he will also address a public meeting there. The Lahual area is also cut off

from rest of the state due to snow and the only road link which connects it from rest of the state passes through Rohtang pass which is around 13500 ft. high. The road is maintained by Border Road Organization (BRO) and it was in the process of opening the road and it was only on 29th May that the road was open for light motor vehicle (Maruti - Gypsy type) with 4 x 4 gear. For public meeting a large number of arrangements were to be made and due to paucity of time and meagre resources available it was daunting task as no material or resources could be mobilized from outside the area. The deputy commissioner called me, we chalked out the strategy and started planning the activities involved in the process. A meeting of local officers was called and both Sub Divisional Magistrates of Udaipur and Keylong Sub Divisions were also given tasks as they had just joined a couple of days back and they were new entrant to the service and had joined their first posting after completing training. A meeting with local people of repute was also called to assist in the process of making arrangements and mobilization of public to the public meeting / rally. The biggest challenge before the administration was to arrange wooden stalks for barricading the rally area / ground as the area is deficient in wood due to negligible presence of trees or forest in the area. The local people were asked to contribute wooden stalks in what ever form these were available and local people agreed to contribute it on the condition that it would not be cut into pieces and be returned to them after use in the same shape and their condition was agreed. Every officer was given a task and I was given the task of making arrangements on public meeting area including barricading, construction of rostrum and toilet etc. for the VVIP and coordination with other agencies involved.

The next day i.e on the 31st May 2000 the state government deputed two senior officers one IAS and other one IPS from Shimla to coordinate but it proved a hurdle in the process for making arrangements and the deputy commissioner asked them either they handle the arrangements or let the local administration handle it and both agreed that the arrangements would be handled by the local administration. On 31st May 2000 some special protection group (SPG) personnels also arrived to coordinate with local authorities. Some intelligence bureau officials also arrived. The state police constabulary, home guards and their officers also started pouring in. Their stay arrangements were

made. The barricading of public rally area was done with wooden stalks and steel pipes by the public works department and irrigation and public health department in consultation with police authorities and special protection group (SPG) officials. The rostrum was also got constructed with steel and wooden planks in consultation with SPG officials and by-side a toilet was also constructed for the VVIP. The rostrum got decorated and bouquet, garlands, flowers and local tribal attire were also arranged for the VVIP. Refreshment arrangements were also made. After preparing the ground for public meeting it was handed over to security agencies. Advance security liaison (ASL) was conducted. On the day of VVIP visit I was given the duty of rostrum area and the Honourable Prime Minister was supposed to come at 9:00 AM on 3rd June, 2000 and he reached by 9:30 AM at Stingry helipad which was 6 K.M away from Keylong the public meeting area and he reached at public rally area around 9:40 AM. I was lucky enough to be with the Honourable Prime Minister on the rostrum while presenting bouquet, garland and local tribal attire to the VVIP by the Chief Minister of the state. By 11:00 AM the public rally / meeting ended and the VVIP drove straight to the Stingry helipad for his return journey to Manali where he was on his summer sojourn. The deputy commissioner ,superintendent of police and I bade him adieu at Stingry helipad and he flew. After the VVIP left for Manali the weather took a sudden turn with in half an hour and it heavily snowed there and remaining air force crew along with one helicopter got stranded there for two days. It was a great experience of my service and life that whole visit arrangements were made in just three days in remote tribal snow bound area with meagre resources and the deputy commissioner was given a pat by the Honourable Chief Minister for making the arrangements for visit in a short notice with meagre resources in remote area.

Manali visit of Prime Minister of India in May 2001

In the last week of October 2000, I was transferred and posted as sub divisional magistrate in Bilaspur Sadar sub division of Bilaspur district and joined as such in the first week of November, 2000 but in May 2001 again transferred and posted as sub divisional magistrate in Manali sub division of Kullu district which shares boundary with Lahaul area of district Lahaul - Spiti and joined there on 11th May , 2001 in the camp

office of Deputy Commissioner Kullu at his residence late in the evening around 10:00 P.M. as on next day the honourable standing committee of parliament on civil aviation was coming to Manali and honourable civil aviation minister Sh. Sharad Yadav was also coming to Manali by air. To receive the honourable minister I accompanied deputy Commissioner Kullu to Bhunter (Kullu) airport in the early morning at 6:30 AM. Weather was erratic in Kullu area and the scheduled flight could land around 3:00 P.M. in the after noon after making two foiled attempts .The VVIP was taken to Manali by road and the parliamentary standing committee in the evening was received at Manali. The parliamentary standing committee after its deliberations and local visit of the area along with honourable civil aviation minister left for Delhi on 15 May, 2001.

Now, it was the turn of big event of my service career as the Honourable Prime Minister of India Sh. Atal Bihari Bajpayee was scheduled to visit Manali on 19th May 2001 as it was annual feature there in Manali because Sh. Bajpayee had his home in Prini village near Manali and he used to come in summers for his summer sojourn and stay there for a fortnight or so. During this long stay of the Prime Minister at Prini village on the left bank of river Beas near Manali , the prime minister office was used to shift temporarily to Prini (Manali) and lot of arrangements were to be made for this purpose. A large number of officers and officials of different departments and agencies come to the area and set up their temporary offices there. First and foremost task was to locate accommodation for such large number of officials of different agencies/ departments including police and home guard personnels to be deployed on security duty in and around the prime minister house and manning roads etc. as he used to visit local areas of Manali / Kullu to interact with people . Accommodation for prime minister office, his personal staff, and other higher officials such as principal secretary to prime minister, national security advisor, private secretaries, media advisor, OSD and special protection group (SPG) etc. was to be arranged near the prime minister house. A large number of hotel rooms in and around Prini village were used to book in advance for this purpose when the local administration received the information regarding the visit of honourable prime minister of India to Manali. Being local area sub divisional magistrate it was all my duty and responsibility to arrange accommodation for the entire staff of different

departments /agencies. Prime minister office was established temporarily in the hotel Holiday Inn which was adjacent to his house and all other high dignitaries and officials of PMO were housed in the said hotel. Some special protection group (SPG) officials come in advance to coordinate with local authorities for security purposes and ensure the screening of the premises and do advance security liaison (ASL) of the route of the VVIP with local police authorities and administration .The local district administration also set up camp office nearby and camp commandant office of police was also set up. A camp office of different departments involved in the process of arrangements of district level offices was also set up .These departments were public works, irrigation and public health, electricity, fire. telephones, catering department, health, public relations etc. The intelligence agencies such as intelligence bureau etc. also set up their temporary offices. A large number of media personnel-print and electronic including Dordarshan and Akashwani also camp there and arrangements for their stay were also made. The police and home guard personnels numbering around 1400 were provided accommodation in school buildings, sarais and other community buildings in the area. During prime minister's stay at Prini (Manali) the state Governor and chief Minister also used to stay at Manali and their stay arrangements were also made. The district administration appointed protocol officers for various visiting dignitaries.

On 19th May,2001 the honourable prime minister along with his entourage arrived at Snow Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE) helipad in Bahang near Manali in three air force helicopters. The honourable prime minister was received at the helipad by the state governor, chief minister, local member parliament (Lok Sabha),local MLA, deputy commissioner, superintendent of police and local sub divisional magistrate. The carcade of the prime minister taking his entire entourage left for village Prini from Bahang helipad as the whole route area was already sealed by the security agencies .The distance from Bahang helipad to Prini was around 7 K.M. The honourable prime minister stayed there for 17 (seventeen) days. During this stay many dignitaries- such as foreign minister, defence minister, home minister, foreign diplomats, governors and chief ministers of few states also visited Manali to meet the prime minister. Many other events also took place during this stay of the prime minister and

arrangements were made accordingly. On 5th of June, 2001 around 9:30 A.M. he left for Delhi from Bahang helipad. It was a great experience of my life and service career to interact with large number of people, officials, dignitaries and last but not least the prime minister and his foster family members.

Year 2002 visit:-

Next year in May 2002 he again visited Prini village (Manali) for his summer sojourn and stayed there for 14 days from 13th May 2002 and left for Delhi on 28th May 2002. The same drill was done as per previous year practice.

Year 2003 visit:-

The next year in 2003 I was transferred from Manali to Himachal institute of Public Administration (HIPA) Fair lawns, Shimla as deputy director and joined there in the third week of February, 2003 and again the state government deputed me to Manali in the month of May 2003 to make arrangements for the honourable prime minister of India summer sojourn at village Prini (Manali) and he stayed there for a fortnight.

A great experience indeed to get involved in the process and arrangements for prime minister of India visit and stay in Himachal Pradesh for four consecutive years i.e. 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 .