

In and Around Lok Sabha

Nomination Season

THE cool, green-carpeted Lobby and the Central Hall have been the centres of activity in the past week though legislative business itself has been limping in a slow and dismal fashion. The shrieking sound of the Quorum Bell was heard almost every afternoon. But this in no way helped to keep the M Ps very long in the House. In a few minutes they were out. For, this is the time when rumours are afoot about the change of portfolios; this is also the time for nominations on delegations going abroad and for appointments on committees. More things are wrought in the Lobby and the Central Hall than is ordinarily imagined; and more reputations are made or marred than one would like to admit. But there you are. The Central Hall is (the Durbar Hall — a place where to be seen in the right group and talking to the right people is noticed and remarked upon. This is where important Ministers hold court and have informal talks after the Question Hour — a sort of "Meet the M Ps" effort.

On some days the Treasury Benches are crowded during the Question Hour and the House is full. These are the days when the External Affairs Ministry or the Defence Ministry Questions are in the list. The Prime Minister is there. Members on the Congress benches bob up more frequently and persistently in the hope that the Prime Minister will notice them; some ask irrelevant questions which bring a sharp dry rebuke from the Speaker or laughter from the House. To be noticed and to be in the public eye is after all an understandable weakness in politicians. Shri Mani Ram Bagri (Lohia Socialist, Punjab) gets up and protests at the proceeding being in English. In a loud voice, he appeals to the Speaker.

"Speaker Sahb — Speaker Sahb"
"Order, Order"-
"Speaker Sahb — — —"

He never fails to get himself noticed. Another member who has so far contributed little to the work of the Lok Sabha except interrupt its

smooth conduct is Swami Rameshwaranand (Jana Sangh, also from Punjab). Every time he says he is unable to understand what is said in English and therefore demands, with out-stretched hands and dramatic gestures, that the medium be changed from English to Hindi. He is an impressive figure in his flowing saffron robes.

Three delegations are going abroad: To Russia at the invitation of the U S S R Government; to Nigeria for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference; and to Brazil for the International Parliamentary Conference. The delegations will comprise of Members of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. Who will be the lucky few to be selected?

Government as 'Land Agents'

The Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill and the Planning Debate were the two important features of last week. There was a sharp difference of opinion between right and left wing Congressmen over the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill. All the persuasive powers of Shri S K Patil who moved the Bill were not enough to get it passed. The socialistic-minded Congressmen were more in agreement with the PSP and the Communist Members than with the Government that the passing of the Bill would empower the Government to acquire land for a private company, with the explanation that such acquisition was necessary "in the interest of the general public" as specified in the Amendment and that "it would be likely to promote the economic development of the country"; that the Government would become "land agents" of the private industrialists for whose benefit the legislation may be used.

The Amendment had become necessary to enlarge the scope of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 after the judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of R L Aurora vs the State of U P (1962). As the judgment may have invalidated the previous acquisition of land by various States for companies engaged in industries "likely to promote the economic development of

the country" or which were "essential to the life of the community", the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Ordinance (1962) was promulgated on July 20, 1962. The Bill is intended to replace the Ordinance.

The Bill will come up for further discussion later. It looks as if it will be passed with some modifications eventually.

The Planning Debate was a disappointment except for the lucid and well argued speeches of Members like Shri Indrajit Gupta, the Communist Member from West Bengal and Shri U N Dhebar. It was obvious that even the Congress Members could not but deplore the shortcomings in the formulation and implementation of the Plan. No new arguments were offered for, the Plan is an ever-present factor in most Parliamentary debates. All that was said had been said before.

Prizes for Cooperative Consumers' Stores

A PRIZE scheme to encourage the organisation and efficient functioning of cooperative consumers' stores has been formulated by the Central Government. Three prizes — Rs 1000, Rs 600 and Rs 400 — will be offered under the scheme which will cover all consumers' stores organised in the Cooperative, Orientation & Study, Small-Scale Industries and Social Education Training centres as well as those run by the National Institute of Study & Research in Community Development and by Khadi Mahavidyalayas. Some 55 cooperative stores have been organised by these bodies.

All stores of this category, whether registered or unregistered, which were working for six months immediately prior to June 30, 1962, will be eligible to participate in the competition. Half the amount of the prize will be credited to the reserve fund of the consumers' stores and the balance will be utilised for welfare purposes to be determined by their members.