

THE LATE PRIME MINISTER NEHRU'S ASHES
SCATTERED FROM THE AIR

NEW DELHI, Jyaistha 22, 1886
June 12, 1964.

The Indian Air Force today scattered from the air the ashes of the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru over the Himalayas and over the farms and fields in all States and corners of India, in fulfilment of the departed leader's wish.

The strewing of the sacred ashes was carried out from IAF Dakotas, IL-14 and Packet transport aircraft and from the S-55, Bell, Alouette and Mi-4 helicopters simultaneously over 20 pre-selected areas that represent India's variegated landscape--the low-lying plains and the snowy mountains, the woods, the sandy soil and the Deccan Plateau.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi chose to be in the Dakota which carried the ashes for scattering over Pahalgam in the Kashmir valley. Attended by Gp.Capt. M.M.S. Bimbet, she arrived at the Palam Air Force Station just before 7 a.m. The ashes lay in a fabric sleeve enclosed in a sealed white box, placed in front of a large sized portrait of the late Prime Minister. The seal was broken and the ashes were handed over by the officiating Station Commander, Wg.Cdr. D. Bouche, to his Adjutant, Sqn.Ldr. K.C. Sharma, and thereafter carried aboard the aircraft in a procession which passed through two rows of 50 airmen presenting arms and officers saluting. In this very Dakota--IJ-817-S, the late Prime Minister and members of the Nehru family had occasionally flown in the past. At the airfield Air Marshal A.M. Engineer, Chief of the Air Staff, and Mrs. Krishna Hutheesing, sister of the late Prime Minister, were also present.

The Bannihal Pass was covered with thick clouds beyond Ram Ban. The captain of the aircraft, Flt.Lt. G.K. Saxena, turned back to Pathankot and took another route via Jammu and Udhampur and managed to cross the Pass through a gap just after 10 a.m.

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A gentle haze hung over the Pahalgam valley which was reached a few minutes later. The floor-panel of the aircraft was unscrewed and at 10.25 a.m. the ashes were let out near the confluence of the Liddar river flowing from the Kolahoi glacier, and its tributary originating from the Shishnag lake. The ashes were cast by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, helped by the signaller, Fg.Offr. K.N. Shastri, from a height of nearly 10,000 feet to spread and, forever mingle with the meadows and the mighty glacier and the rugged mountains in the Liddar valley which Jawaharlal Nehru greatly adored and often visited.

The aircraft with Mrs. Indira Gandhi returned to Palam soon after 1 p.m.

From Palam were also carried ashes placed in another fabric sleeve and flown to Najafgarh in an Alouette helicopter by Sqn.Ldr. K.K.Saini, who had flown the late Prime Minister on his last visit to Dehra Dun and back to Delhi on May 26. The ashes were scattered from the Alouette over a field in Najafgarh, about 15 miles from Delhi, where toiling cultivators, men and women, and their bullocks were out on their morning routine of tilling the sun-baked land.

Mrs. Vijaylakshmi Pandit, Governor of Maharashtra, flew separately from Bombay in another IAF VIP Dakota to witness the scattering of the ashes over a field near the Ahmednagar Fort with which the late Prime Minister had had historical associations.

** Miss Padmaja Naidu, Governor of West Bengal, flew in an IAF helicopter over Darjeeling where, near the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, the ashes of Jawaharlal Nehru--the Chief Patron of the Institute--were also strewn this morning.

** Included in the various places selected for scattering the ashes, were fields in Panjim in Goa, Port Blair (Andamans), Bomdi La (NEFA), Laccadive islands, Nagarjuna Sagar (Andhra Pradesh) and over the southern-most tip of India--Kanyakumari.

A six-foot-long Nylon sleeve with a sand ballast was specially

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designed to contain the ashes. The fabric sleeve was attached to a 12-foot static line with a snap-hook at one end with which to anchor it with the aircraft. Transport aircraft were modified to allow the removal of a floor panel of the aircraft during flight, and let-out the fabric sleeve through a specially made side aperture, which ensured complete streaming out of the ashes over the pre-determined area. In Delhi, trial flights to ensure a foolproof efficacy of the device were carried out personally by the Director of Air Operations, Air Commodore H.C. Dewan, during the past three days. Trained aircrew were deployed on the aircraft for scattering of the ashes from heights ranging from one to 3,000 feet above ground level depending upon the speed and the type of aircraft.

SM/OD

** Until 4 p.m., no confirmation was available whether the scattering of the ashes over Darjeeling and Bomdi La, where the weather was bad, had actually taken place. This may please be checked (35360/618217) later in the evening.

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