

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Visit of guests of His Highness

19 guests of His Highness from the AKU inauguration ceremonies arrived at Gilgit airport at 1100 hours on 12.11.1985 in a PAF C-130 arranged by the President of Pakistan. They were received by Mr. Robert Shaw, Director of Special Programmes, AKF, Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, GM of AKRSP and members of the AKRSP staff.

Upon disembarking from the plane, each visitor was handed briefing notes (on baggage, hotel, weather etc.), a schedule of engagements and field visits and note on assignments of passengers to the three helicopters. The visitors proceeded to the airport building, where Serena Lodge had arranged to serve refreshments in the lawn in front of the VIP Lounge. While the visitors used the lounge and refreshed themselves, Mr. Shaw finalised the list of visitors and helicopter assignments on the basis of who had actually showed up. TH and NAM put tags on untagged baggage so that all baggage could be checked into the proper rooms at the hotel.

The visitors proceeded to AKRSP offices in coaches provided by AKRSP and Serena Lodge. They watched a film on AKRSP, after the GM presented an update on the progress. Questions were asked by the visitors, particularly by Dr. John Bryant of the AKU Department of Community Medicine, Dr. Nabil Kronfol of the American University of Beirut and Prof. Stambouli, a sociologist from Tunisia. The visitors then enjoyed a marvelous cold lunch put out on the office lawns by Serena Lodge. The lunch, and the glorious sunny weather encouraged amiable intermingling between the visitors and AKRSP staff.

All the visitors spent the afternoon of the 12th visiting Sherqilla and Singal to look at health and education projects. Upon returning to Gilgit, half the visitors expressed a desire to drive straight to the bazaar and were taken there in the AKRSP coaster; TH acted as the tour guide. The rest of the passengers went to the hotel first before proceeding to the bazaar.

The visitors and senior AKRSP staff were invited to dinner at the FCNA officers mess by MLA Zone 'E', Major General Safdar Ali Khan. Mr. Shaw, HWK, IHM and TH accompanied the visitors from the Serena Lodge to the FCNA mess, while the GM and ZA proceeded straight to the mess. As the first guest got down from the coaster at precisely 1930 hours, the army band struck up its notes of welcome, and the visitors proceeded, one by one, into the reception area inside the building, where they were personally welcomed by the MLA. After dinner, the MLA made a brief speech and presented local caps to all the visitors. An entertaining programme of local dances was the last event of the day for the visitors.

The next morning, Mr. Shaw, IHM and TH went to Serena Lodge at 0615 hours to escort the visitors to the airport. The party arrived at the airport well in time for the scheduled take-off, only to find that Puma 1, assigned to the architects visiting Baltit, was still grounded at the army helipad with a technical problem. The Bell 412 took off first, with the GM and HWK accompanying 6 of the AKU guests plus Mr. Muzaffar Mahmood Qureshi, Chief Executive RDFC. Puma 2 took off next, with Mr. Shaw, IHM and TH accompanying the remaining visitors plus Mr. & Mrs. Jamal Feerasta of the Serena Lodge. Major Mubashar of ISI was also on board Puma 2, with the permission of the pilots. Passengers for Puma 1 had to proceed to Hunza by road in AKRSP jeeps commandeered at the airport by Dr. Najam of AKU, when it was realized that Puma 1 would not be operating.

The first stop was Risht/Shehrsabz, where the visitors met almost all of the entire male population of the two villages at the school, as well as all the school children. The children sang a prayer poem by Allama Iqbal, followed by the National Anthem. All the visitors were visibly overwhelmed by their surroundings, and Dr. Bryant and Dr. Kronfol took a particular interest in the methodology of AKRSP. Mr. Cuningham, a geographer with extensive mountain climbing experience in Nepal, was overheard expressing a desire to donate CDN \$1,000 to the villagers. Ms Smalley, a Canadian TV Journalist, spent all her time photographing the village and its residents, and came aboard the helicopter only after the rotors had started, the doors locked and take-off was imminent. It became obvious that Mr. Shaw was going to have to shepherd the guests forcefully in order to keep to the schedule: although every visitor had a copy of the schedule, few paid much attention to it.

At Soust, the visitors were explained the implementation of the tunnel, and were duly impressed. TH moved some of the tea, coffee and biscuits from the Bell to Puma 2. Upon take-off, TH and Mr. Feerasta opened up the flying snack bar, and the refreshments were taken up appreciatively by the crew and passengers alike.

It was also at Soust that we were informed about accidents involving 2 jeeps that were rushing from Passu to Soust that morning. One Daihatsu had slipped on the icy path near Khaiber and turned on its left side into a drain along the KKH. The Toyota in front of it hit its right rear against a boulder when the driver braked at the sight in his rear-view mirror. The damaged Daihatsu was pushed back onto the road by a group of touring students from Azad Kashmir; the other vehicle was present at Soust for the visitors. Another aspect of the Soust visit was the reported statement of some villagers that they were quite fed up with entertaining visitors and foregoing their income from daily wages. (It was subsequently decided in a PPM not to concentrate visits onto a handful of villages.)

The Passu visit was a colourful as that for the journalists a few days earlier. Prof. Stambouli was in his element here, patting children on the cheek, and Ms Smalley was impressed by what she called the harmony between the people and their culture on the one hand and AKRSP-sponsored development on the other. Mr. Jobbins of the Times Higher Education Supplement, interviewed local school teachers, as he had done in Risht.

The next stop was Shishkat, where the visitors saw the self-help school; the visit was organised by the staff of the education institution.

With the help of Mr. Shaw's prodding throughout the day, the visitors arrived at Mir Ghazanfar's house in Hunza a little before the scheduled arrival at 1200 noon. Here, a grand display of local songs and dances took place on the grounds of palace, while thousands Hunzakuts, sitting in surroundings terraces, converted the location into a large open air theater. It was a glorious, sunny day and everyone was thrilled by the half-hour of energetic dances and music played with gusto. The entertainment was followed by a lavish lunch inside the palace, after which Mr. Ghazanfar presented local caps to all the visitors and their hosts.

The Bell and Puma 2 ferried all the passengers back to Gilgit by 1430 hours with Puma making 2 trips. Refreshment were taken in front of the VIP lounge and the visitors finally took off for Islamabad in the C-130 at 1500 hours.

Comments in the visitor's book:

Mr. Alvine Lee	The physical places and the villages of people working hard together are a deeply moving experience for visitors from the outside. His Highness the Aga Khan and the many others who are working to develop this region deserve the profound respect of the world. They have mine.
Ms Tina Lee	The reception we have received has been overwhelming. The people of this area are extremely hospitable and warm. The work at the AKRSP is of the utmost importance and worthy of the world's gratitude.
Mr. R.B. Lewcock	Extremely impressive.
Mr. John H. Bryant	AKRSP must be considered one of the leading development agencies of the developing world. We at AKU look forward to cooperation and collaboration.
Mr. F. Stambouli (Needs translation from Arabic)	
Mr. A.W. El-Wakil	Just wonderful.
Mr. Jim Antonion	Wonderful experience.
Ms Matherine Smalley	Inspiring and beautiful
Mr. Sajid Rizvi	Bewitching and instructive.