

Political (1898) Department.

ORDINARY MS.

G.O., No. 231

DATED 31-3-98

[Despatch Abstract.]

Caution to the Political Agent, Saurashtra, for information to guidance, proceedings, L & M Dept, directing the publication in the Fort St. George & St. Lawrence of a notification prohibiting pilgrimages to Virupakshaswami festival at Hampi during March & April 1898.

31/3/98

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

Government {1898} of Madras. LOCAL AND MUNICIPAL.

For Plague Act. L.A.

Please say why comm? W.P.

For communication to the
Administrator of Sandur this
Enclosures
23 - 3 - 1898.
24 March
Spare copies
29/3/98.

G.O., No. 208-P., 15th March 1898.

ORDER
W.P. 231 of 31-3-98

MARCH.

Communicated to the Political
Agent, Sandur, for information
and guidance

To
The Poll. Agent Sandur
(on S.C.)

31.3.98
Att 31.3.98

Bubonic Plague.

Ordering the publication of a notification prohibiting pilgrimage to Virupakshaswami festival at Hampi during March and April 1898, and requesting the Bombay, Mysore and His Highness the Nizam's Governments to notify the prohibition and issue orders stopping the sale of railway tickets from the 29th March to 13th April to any pilgrim or person intending to attend the festival.

WITH ORDER

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

LOCAL AND MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following papers :—

From E. A. ELWIN, Esq., Acting Collector of Bellary, to the Secretary to Government, Local and Municipal Department, dated 4th March 1898, Ref. on Cur. No. 634.

In reporting that the celebration of the annual car festival of Virupakshaswami at Hampi in the Hospet taluk of this district will take place about one month hence, I have the honour to recommend, in view to the prevention of a possible outbreak of the bubonic plague, the adoption of precautionary measures somewhat similar to those ordered in the case of the festivals recently held at Mylar or Kuruvatti.

2. Hampi is situated on the river Tungabhadra opposite to Anagondi, the chief village of a small jaghire of the same name in the Hyderabad State. The nearest railway station is Hospet, 7 miles off. Visitors to the place sometimes alight at the Daroji station, 16 miles off.

3. The festival is in ordinary times attended by some 15,000 or 20,000 persons; but as it is generally known that precautions will be taken to prevent the introduction of the plague, the attendance is unlikely to be so large this year. Not less than half the pilgrims usually come from the Bombay Presidency and the Hyderabad State.

4. The car will be dragged on 6th proximo, the principal day of the festival, and arrivals will begin as early as 31st instant. The festival may be said to last for a fortnight altogether.

5. The arrangements that I beg to propose are that (a) no person from either the Bombay Presidency or the Hyderabad State shall be permitted to visit Hampi from 31st instant to 13th proximo, the bank of the Tungabhadra river being guarded by a patrol of police constables and peons of the Salt and Abkari Department, as was done at Mylar and Kuruvatti; (b) between 29th instant and 10th proximo the issue of railway tickets at any station in the Bombay Presidency and the Hyderabad State to Munirabad, Hospet, Papinayakanahalli, Gadiganur, Tornagallu and Daroji stations on the Southern Mahratta Railway to any pilgrim or person intending to attend the festival shall be prohibited; (c) the Head Assistant Collector and a Commissioned Medical Officer shall be present at the festival.

From Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. KING, M.B., C.M., D.P.H., Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the Secretary to Government, Local and Municipal Department, dated Fort St. George, 10th March 1898, No. 580-S.

With reference to the approaching festival at Hampi in the Bellary district, I have the honour to advise that Government direct that it be not held, on the ground that it would be a menace to the public health. Government is aware that Sholapur, Bijapur, Belgaum and the Hyderabad territory are affected with indigenous plague. I have personally attended this festival in former years, and judging from my experience then and from recent enquiries made at Hospet, I have no doubt that a large proportion of the total pilgrims are inhabitants of these districts. Under the

circumstances, it seems to me a matter of importance to the population of this Presidency that the festival be not held this year. So "imminently threatened" does Government regard the district of Bellary that it has but recently sanctioned a special scheme for maintaining the population under a system of observation. This being so, it is apparent that the holding of a festival of this character so largely attended by persons from infected districts would be illogical, and must involve unusual risk to the public health. Personally, I hold that it is most mischievous to interfere with the normal movements of the public, under the impression that plague can be checked thereby; still more do I hold that nothing but extreme urgency would justify my suggesting that a religious festival should be interfered with. In this instance, however, urgency can, and ought to be, pleaded. In asking Government to prohibit this festival, I would respectfully remind it that it is an annual festival and one which, though of importance in the Ceded Districts for certain classes,—chiefly the Lingayats—does not affect a wide area in this Presidency. Nothing is more common in native life than to defer for a season the fulfilment of vows or the desire to worship at a special shrine, in the event of family troubles occurring to prevent convenient attendance, or should the fact that epidemic sickness prevails at the place of pilgrimage become known. Indeed, the edicts of Vishnu hold it incumbent upon the Hindu to forego religious observances during any period of "public distress" such as likely to arise during epidemic sickness. Further, this festival is not of the nature of those where certain auspicious events (such as the arrival of the Ganges water at a particular spot) occur at rare intervals, and where, consequently, did the devotee fail to make the visit at the required time an equally good opportunity might not present itself again in a life-time. From enquiries made by me, I believe that no public discontent would follow, and that the people of the district concerned will readily recognize that the action advised is in their interest at this special juncture. I may add that I see less reason for preventing festivals after plague has entered a district than before it has established itself, and when efforts are actually being made to prevent its entrance.

ORDER—No. 208-P., dated 15th March 1898.

In view of the prevalence of plague in the districts of the Bombay Presidency and His Highness the Nizam's Dominions which are in close proximity to the Bellary district, His Excellency the Governor in Council after careful consideration resolves to direct that pilgrimage to Virupakshaswami festival at Hampi be prohibited this year. In communicating this decision to the trustees and the temple committee of the Hampi temple, the Collector of Bellary is requested to let them know distinctly that the only object of the prohibition is to prevent the assemblage of crowds through whom might be imported the plague which is so imminently threatening to attack this Presidency, and that it is not in any way intended to interfere with the performance of the usual religious ceremonies at the temple. The following notification will be published in the Fort St. George and all District Gazettes :—

NOTIFICATION.

Whereas the Governor of Fort St. George in Council is satisfied that there is danger of an outbreak of dangerous epidemic disease at Hampi in the Hospet taluk of the Bellary district, if pilgrims are permitted to visit Hampi on the occasion of the ensuing annual car festival of Virupakshaswami;

In exercise of the powers delegated by the Governor-General in Council under section 2, sub-section (3), of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, His Excellency the Governor in Council is pleased to prohibit pilgrimage to the Hampi festival during the months of March and April 1898, and to direct that from the 29th March to the 13th April 1898 no tickets to travel by railway to Munirabad, Hospet, Papinayakanahalli, Gadiganur, Tornagallu and Daroji stations shall be issued to any person intending or believed to be intending to attend the festival.

All such persons arriving at Hampi at the time of the festival will be sent back."

2. The Collector of Bellary is requested to arrange with the Commissioner of Salt, Abkari and Separate Revenue and the Inspector-General of Police for the necessary patrol and guard to stop the pilgrims and send them back.

3. The following telegrams will be despatched :—

To the Collector of { Kurnool.
Bellary.
Cuddapah.
Anantapur.
North Arcot.

" Notify by issue of Gazette Extraordinary and in every other possible way that in consequence of danger of plague, pilgrimage to Virupakshaswami festival at Hampi from 31st March to 13th April is prohibited under Epidemic Diseases Act."

To the { Government of Bombay.
Resident at Hyderabad.
Resident in Mysore.

" This Government requests ^{Bombay} H. H. Nizam's Government to notify that in consequence of danger of plague, pilgrimage to Virupakshaswami festival at Hampi, Bellary district, from 31st March to 13th April, has been prohibited under Epidemic Diseases Act, and to issue orders stopping sale of railway tickets from 29th March to 13th April to Munirabad, Hospet, Papinayakanahalli, Gadiganur, Tornagalla and Daroji railway stations to any pilgrim or person ^{Mysore} intending to attend festival from ^{Bombay Presidency} H. H. Dominions and also to prohibit attendance at festival of persons coming therefrom."

(True Extract.)

29. 3. 98
for Ag. Secretary to Government.
22. 3. 98

To the Collector of Bellary.
" " Kurnool.
" " Cuddapah.
" " Anantapur.
" " North Arcot.
" all other Collectors.
" the Surgeon-General.
" the Sanitary Commissioner.
" the Public Works Department (Railway Branch).
" the Political Department.
" the Commissioner of Salt and Abkari Revenue.
" the Inspector-General of Police.
" the Superintendent, Government Press.
Gazette.

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READ AGAIN G.O., No.
189

, DATED

CURRENT No.

ENCLOSURES TO G. No.

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT.

A A A A A A A

LETTER OF GOVERNMENT.

STATEMENT WITH DITTO

PAPERS NOT FILLED UP, BEING MEANT FOR DESPATCH
IN ORIGINAL.

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