

Uranium

*1585. **Shri Narasimhan:** Will the Prime Minister be pleased to state

(a) when the occurrence of the Uranium bearing rocks in Salem was discovered;

(b) when will the deposits be explored by bore-holes, and

(c) the preliminary indication as to the quality and quantity of the occurrence?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of External Affairs (Shri Sadath Ali Khan): (a) Radio-activity was first recorded in Kullampatti area of Salem District, Madras State, in 1956

(b) and (c) A considerable amount of detailed geological work is necessary before underground drilling can be undertaken. The investigation so far carried out indicate that drilling would be justified and it is therefore proposed to start drilling operations shortly. Unless a certain amount of drilling and development work is done, it is premature to assess the quantity and quality of the ore from the deposit.

Shri C. R. Narasimhan: May I know where exactly in Salem district was this found?

Shri Sadath Ali Khan: This area comprises the foothills of Suryamalai hills and Tiruchengodu tehsil in Salem district of Madras State.

12 hrs.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

Food Scarcity in N.E.F.A

16. **Shri Hem Barua:** Will the Prime Minister be pleased to state.

(a) whether it is a fact that some 120 Mishrus, Lohit Valley, Hayuliang, NEFA, have recently died as a result of malnutrition and acute scarcity of food and due to non-availability of medical help to ameliorate the suffering of the tribal people,

(b) whether the surviving people have practically nothing to depend upon for the future months, and if so, what steps Government have so far taken to treat this matter on a "top priority" level, and rush help in food and medicine to these affected areas in NEFA?

The Deputy Minister of External Affairs (Shrimati Lakshmi Menon):

(a) and (b) We have received no report of death from starvation or from malnutrition. There has however been outbreak of a serious epidemic of malignant malaria in the locality and upto the 21st March, 80 deaths have been reported from this disease.

As soon as reports of the epidemic reached the NEFA Administration, additional medical aid was rushed to the area. The District Medical Officer has gone from Tezu to Hayuliang personally to supervise the arrangements. Three doctors and two compounders with the necessary medical supplies have already reached the area and mobile teams have been set up for rendering medical aid on the spot in outlying villages. Additional stocks of medicines have been sent to the area. Owing to the difficult terrain it is not easy to move from place to place and this has added to the difficulties of coping with the epidemic. I may add that the Chief Minister of Assam and the Adviser to the Governor of Assam visited Tezu in the middle of February and although they were met by a large number of village leaders from the Lohit Valley, nobody complained to them of death from starvation or inadequate medical aid.

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether the attention of the Government is drawn to a signed article by a Mishru, Kobbso Tinda appearing in the *Democratic Review* of Shillong dated the 19th March where he alleges that 120 Mishrus have died by starvation? If that is not a fact, as the hon. Minister just now said, why was it not contradicted immediately by the NEFA Administration in Shillong?

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I cannot say what appeared in some local papers there. But we have given the facts after investigation by the Chief Minister himself and the advisers to the NEFA Government, and this in itself is an adequate contradiction.

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether it is a fact that the local officers there sent top priority signals to the Agent in Shillong and he was not moving till the 19th of March?

Shrimati Lakshmi Menon: I have already pointed out in the answer that as early as February the Chief Minister and the Adviser to the Governor visited the area.

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether the Government are aware of the great topographical changes in the area due to the great earthquake of 1950 and, if so, whether Government propose to rehabilitate these Mishrris, 5,000 only in number because of these topographical changes and the difficulty of the terrain, as the Deputy Minister has said?

Shrimati Lakshmi Menon: That question does not arise.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: We would like to be assured that the price of rice and the availability of rice is all right and satisfactory in this area, because we ourselves know that right in January and February we in the much more accessible areas were experiencing great difficulty. Therefore, we would like to be assured that on this score NEFA is OK and there is no difficulty there, as far as availability of food is concerned.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: To say that NEFA is OK, for the matter of that, large parts of India are OK is more than what I can say. NEFA is a place with very difficult communications. It has recently improved. Previously it took weeks and weeks to go a short distance, even now, although it is better. There are always difficulties there and we have to import, and

sometimes by aeroplanes take this. And in our attempts to do so, in the past we have lost quite a large number of aircraft because of the dangerous and difficult flying conditions. But I feel conditions are much better now. Mainly we are trying to raise food production there, though it takes a little time. The conditions are better than they were, both because of communications and more production. But for me to say that this place is OK would not be correct.

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether Government propose to make NEFA region more accessible to the press so that the iron curtain that is imposed now against news percolating from the NEFA area is lifted?

Mr Speaker: We are going away from one thing to another.

Shri Hem Barua: We want to know the correct picture. Now the news that percolates from Shillong is always a torso of the picture. What we want is a free press.

Mr Speaker: All that may be all right. But that does not arise out of this question.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Employees' State Insurance Scheme

*1571 **Shri Rameshwar Tanti:** Will the Minister of Labour and Employment be pleased to state

(a) the number of factory workers who were expected to be covered by Employees' State Insurance Scheme by the end of 1958, and

(b) the number of employees actually so covered?

The Deputy Minister of Labour (Shri Abid Ali): (a) 13.75 lakhs of employees

(b) 13.56 lakhs of employees