

# LOK SABHA DEBATES

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## LOK SABHA

Wednesday, April 8, 1959/Chaitra  
18, 1881 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the  
Clock.

[Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Explosion at Gun Factory, Katni

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\*1721. { Shri A. M. Tariq:  
Shri Rajendra Singh:  
Shri Keshava:  
Shri Raghunath Singh:  
Shri Bose:  
Shrimati Masida Ahmed:  
Dr. Ram Subhag Singh:  
Shri Khushwaqt Rafi:  
Pandit D. N. Tiwary:  
Shri Muhammed Elias:

Will the Minister of Works, Housing and Supply be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in December, 1958 there was an explosion in the Gun Factory at Katni in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) the circumstances under which the explosion took place;

(c) the loss of life and property; and

(d) whether any compensation has been paid to the victims?

The Deputy Minister of Works, Housing and Supply (Shri Anil K. Chanda): (a) Yes, Sir. The explosion occurred in a Gunpowder factory and not in a Gun factory.

(b) From the inquiry conducted by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Katni

33 (A) L.S.D.—1.

as also from the report of the Inspector of Explosives, Central Circle, Nagpur, it would appear that the explosion was due to the presence of foreign matter in the mixture of ingredients of gunpowder while it was being pounded.

(c) Nine persons lost their lives and five persons were injured. Two gunpowder manufacturing sheds were blown off and one was badly damaged. The floors of the two drying platforms also developed some cracks.

(d) The firm has deposited Rupees nine thousand for payment as compensation to the families of the deceased. The question of payment of compensation to the injured persons is also being pursued by the local District Authorities.

Shri D. C. Sharma: May I know how this foreign matter came to be mixed up with the real substance and whether no checks are available to prevent this kind of thing?

Shri Anil K. Chanda: From enquiry it was found out that the mixing was done in a shed which was not authorised for this operation. So far as check is concerned, there are hundreds of small firms producing gunpowder all over the country and it is not possible to maintain an inspecting staff in every factory.

Shri Ram Krishan Gupta: May I know whether any action has been taken against the officer who is responsible for this mixing?

Shri Anil K. Chanda: The officer is not responsible. We have suspended the licence of the firm and we are taking steps to prosecute the firm

because there had been several violations of the conditions of the licence.

**Shri Bose:** May I know what foreign material was mixed up with this explosive powder and whether it has been checked so as to know if such foreign material is also being mixed in other factories?

**Shri Anil K. Chanda:** The foreign material was found to be grit and iron particles. By a magnetic test it was found that iron particles were there. Also there was grit from the shed where the mixing takes place. As I said, the mixing was being done in a place which was not authorised for the purpose.

**Shri Kasliwal:** The hon. Minister referred to several violations of the licence. May I know whether these violations have come to the notice of the Government only after this explosion or even before, and if it was even before, what action was taken?

**Shri Anil K. Chanda:** No, Sir. The factory was inspected only about three months before this accident. The licence was given because the conditions in the factory satisfied all the requirements of the licence. But then, subsequent to the granting of the licence they have been violating some of the conditions.

**Shri Braj Raj Singh:** May I know on what criteria this sum of Rs. 9,000 has been placed for the payment of compensation? Did not the Government think that more money should be made available for the payment of compensation to the persons who have been killed?

**Shri Anil K. Chanda:** It is under the Workmen's Compensation Act and it is done by the State Government.

**Shri Hem Barua:** May I know who is the licensee who went on violating the conditions like that?

**Shri Anil K. Chanda:** His name is Shankar Lal.

**Shri Tyagi:** The hon. Minister stated that the mixing of gunpowder

was being done in an unauthorised place. May I know if the Superintendent of the factory or someone else responsible takes daily rounds of the factory and whether he does not see into these cases of mixing?

**Shri Anil K. Chanda:** It is a very small private concern. It seems that when the accident took place the licensee himself was not present. The whole operations were in charge of an almost illiterate workman.

**Shri Vajpayee:** May I know if there is any scheme for the insurance of those workers who are employed in this strenuous work?

**Shri Anil K. Chanda:** I am afraid it is not for me to answer this question.

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** Next question.

**Shri Bose:** In regard to the second part of my question....

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** I am sorry. I have passed on to the next question.

#### Fertiliser Plant in Rajasthan

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\*1722. { **Shri Subodh Hansda:**  
**Shri S. C. Samanta:**  
**Shri R. C. Majhi:**  
**Shri Ram Krishan Gupta:**

Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal to set up the Fertiliser Plant in Rajasthan has been finalised;

(b) if so, whether its plan and estimates have been prepared;

(c) whether any work has been started; and

(d) if so, the progress made so far?

The Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri Satish Chandra): (a) to (d). The proposal to set up a fertilizer factory in Rajasthan will be considered along with other suitable sites when additional fertilizer factories are planned.