

13.19 hrs.

**(III) Nation Welfare Board for Seafarers**

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION (SHRI K.P. UNNIKRIISHNAN): I beg to move:

"That in pursuance of Rule 4 (i) of the National Welfare Board for Seafarers Rules, 1963, the members of this House do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Speaker may direct, one member from among themselves to serve as a member of the National Welfare Board for Seafarers, subject to the other provisions of the said Rules."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That in pursuance of Rule 4 (i) of the National Welfare Board for Seafarers Rules, 1963, the member of this House do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Speaker may direct, one member from among themselves to serve as a member of the National Welfare Board for Seafarers, subject to the other provisions of the said Rules."

*The motion was adopted*

13.20 hrs.

**(iv) Rajghat Samadhi Committee**

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA): On behalf of Shri Murasoli Maran Sir, I beg to move:

"That in pursuance of sub-section (1) (d) of Section 4 of the Rajghat Samadhi Act, 1951, the members of this House do proceed to elect in such manner as the Speaker may direct, two members from among themselves to serve as members of the Rajghat Samadhi Committee for the term

commencing from the date of notification by the Government, subject to the other provisions of the said Act."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That in pursuance of sub-section (1) (d) of Section 4 of the Rajghat Samadhi Act, 1951, the members of this House do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Speaker may direct, two members from among themselves to serve as members of the Rajghat Samadhi Committee for the term commencing from the date of notification by the Government, subject to the other provisions of the said Act."

*The motion was adopted*

13.21 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Draining of large quantity of furnace oil from Bokaro Steel Plant resulting in Pollution of Damodar river water causing stoppage of water supply to the entire industrial and colliery belt of Dhanbad district**

[English]

SHRI A.K. ROY: Sir, I call the attention of the hon. Minister of Steel and Mines to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:-

"The situation arising out of draining of large quantity of furnace oil from Bokaro Steel Plant into the Damodar river leading to pollution of the river water, causing stoppage of water supply to the entire industrial and colliery belt of Dhanbad district of Bihar and the steps taken by the Government in that regard."

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES AND MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI): Sir, I share the concern of the Honourable Members regarding situation arising out of draining of large quantity of furnace oil from Bokaro Steel Plant into the Damodar River leading to pollution of the river water, causing stoppage of water supply to the entire industrial and colliery belt of Dhanbad District of Bihar.

Since February 1990, Low Sulphur Heavy Stock Oil firing was started in one of the seven kilns of the Refractory Material Plant of the Bokaro Steel Plant, as a substitute for costly coal-tar fuel. Other six furnaces are still on Coal-tar fuel.

For this purpose an installation consisting of two tanks of 1800 cubic metre capacity each, along with pumping facilities etc. have been set up near the Refractory Material Plant within the perimeter wall of the steel plant.

Low Sulphur Heavy Stock (LSHS) oil unloading started from 26th February, 1990. As LSHS was not available, Furnace oil was supplied by the oil company as a substitute and unloading of the same was started on 31st March, 1990 and completed on 4th April, 1990. Much of the LSHS unloaded had already been utilised and only a small quantity was in the tank.

Bihar pollution control Board charges a cess for the discharge of effluents. A rebate is allowed when the amount of the effluents is less than the norm fixed. During February, 1990, Bokaro Steel Plant earned a sizeable rebate on this account. Furnace oil is being used by Bokaro Steel Plant since inception in the power plant and there has not been any complaint regarding oil pollution over the years.

DVC authorities at Chandrapura brought to Bokaro Steel Plant's notice at 1730 hours on 5th April, 1990 that some oil was noticed finding its way into the intake area of the DVC in the Damodar River. Prompt action was taken by Bokaro Steel Plant to trace and plug

the source of leakage. The source was traced to the two drain valves of the tanks at LSHS station of the RMP which were found partially open. These valves are always kept closed except when annual cleaning of the tank is undertaken. The discharge was stopped by 2230 hours on the same day.

The circumstances leading to the unauthorised opening of the valves are being investigated by a four member internal Committee headed by Shri A.K. Poddar, General Manager (Materials), Bokaro Steel Plant and including Additional General Manager (Maintenance and Services), Deputy General Manager (Safety) and Assistant General Manager (Water Supply). The preliminary report points to theft as a motive and so a complaint has also been lodged with local Police on April 10, 1990. However, Mischief as motive cannot be ruled out at this stage.

A quantity of around 200 Kilo .litre of furnace oil is estimated to have leaked into the Damodar River. Due to dry season and low flow of water, the oil got collected at Jamadoba, about 40 kms. down stream of the river from where drinking water for Dhanbad City is pumped. Due to presence of oil, pumping of water from Jamadoba to Dhanbad was discontinued in the evening of April 6, 1990 thus preventing any contamination.

Immediately after hearing from the Coal Mines Area Development Authority, Government of Bihar, the Bokaro Steel Plant rushed on April 6, 1990 a team of officers and workforce with all the implements to diffuse the effect of oil on the water supply to Dhanbad and adjacent areas under the Coal Mines Area Development Authority of Bihar. Elaborate arrangements were made to burn out the oil wherever possible and barricade oil from the intake area of the pumps house at Jamadoba. The supply of drinking water was also supplemented by Bokaro Management using tankers.

Managing Director, Bokaro Steel Plant and other senior officers who had gone to the Pumping Station and along with District

Authorities worked round the clock in clearing the accumulated oil and restoring water supply, which was duly done on April 10, 1990 around 1100 Hours after ensuring that the quality of filtered water was absolutely normal

The District Authorities had also alerted the down stream areas as matter of precaution and, as per information available, no abnormal situation was encountered in the down stream river upto the Panchet Dam. In order to dilute the concentration of the oil in the river, additional water was also opened from Tenughat reservoir to the extent of 2600 cusecs

The value of the oil lost is estimated to be around Rs. 6 lakhs. This oil is procured indigenously and there is no foreign exchange outgo in its procurement by Bokaro Steel Plant.

The Plant has already taken a number of steps to ensure that undue discharge of effluent does not take place. These include —

- 1 The drainage system valves have been blanked with steel plates
- 2 All oil separation chambers have been flushed and cleared
- 3 The frequency of inspection and monitoring of the effluents has been increased to daily basis
- 4 A coffer dam at the outfall channel is being built to decant the oil
- 5 An elaborate system for Pollution Control is being worked out with the help of internationally renowned Consultants

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER Before Mr Roy starts putting his question I would like to read some portions from the handbook for the benefit of the Members so that we can regulate the discussion. The rule says that no debate is permitted on such statement at

the time it is made but each Member in whose name the item stands in the List of Business may, with the permission of the Speaker, ask a specific and brief clarificatory question relevant to the subject. The Member who calls attention should not take more than 10 minutes and other Members not more than five minutes each. The Minister replies at the end of all the clarificatory questions asked by the Members. The total time taken on a Calling Attention on a day is restricted to half-an-hour to 45 minutes.

SHRI A K ROY Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir I would like to know whether the furnace oil concentration in Damodar river has been diluted or not. In the statement, an attempt has been made to dilute the seriousness of this offence. I can say this is an issue which is as serious as the Bhopal Gas Leak incident. There was gas poisoning at that time. The only thing is that in this case it was fortunately detected by some workers working in the water supply station so that a major mishap has been prevented but its contaminating effect is still continuing. This issue involves three Ministries. The first one is the Steel Ministry which has drained the oil. Secondly, the Ministry of Environment and Forests will just measure the extent of pollution in the river water. Thirdly, the Health Ministry will examine its effect on the health. So, it is a very serious thing. I should say this fact here. Though our attention is now concentrated on the North-West or the North-East this industrial heart of our country is also not free from the trouble and this incident has proved that

Sir after reading the news I went to the place. I visited the place. I visited Bokaro Steel Plant also. I was appalled by the callousness of the authorities. I visited the place on the 8th. And I am now finding that they all went on the 10th to the spot to do the corrective things. I consider this offence as a no less serious than the offence committed by these extremists in Punjab or in Kashmir. It is said that no foreign exchange is involved. I like to ask the Minister about this. This furnace oil is not an indigenously produced oil. Furnace oil is a fraction of the

[Sh. A.K. Roy]

crude oil and it is a fraction heavier than the diesel oil that is used in the furnace power plant and now in the calcination plant of the limestone. As we are still to import one-third of our crude oil from abroad, any loss of oil means loss of foreign exchange. But I am surprised to find that it has been said like that, you understand the seriousness of the thing and the callousness of the management. How did the plant leak? How did the valve remain open from 2nd April? For three days continuously the entire oil was draining to the river. On the 5th April, it was detected at the Jamadoba Water Supply Plant Station which is some forty kilometres down-stream, that the entire water was full with thick oil layer. It was then brought to the notice of the higher authorities. Then they started searching the thing because they thought that some nearby colliery, the Mundihi washery has drained the entire thing. When the Mundihi Washery was contacted, the Bharat Coking Coal said that it has got no knowledge. Then they thought of contacting the Dugdha washery. They also said that they had no knowledge. Then they contacted the Chandrapura Power Plant. The Chandrapura Power Plant also expressed its ignorance. Rather it expressed its alarm over the thing because some water which they took was also contaminated with the furnace oil. Then the Bokaro Steel Plant was contacted. And you will be surprised to know that Bokaro Steel Plant was contacted in the morning and they took the whole day, full twelve hours, to locate wherefrom the oil was getting leaked. And in the night only they could locate that and they could close that.

I visited the place. I would like to tell this Minister that the tank was built to contain Low Sulphur Heavy Stock Oil to fire in the furnace or calcination plant. It has two outlets. One for pumping it into the furnace. That outlet is at a certain higher level so that no water, when you pump it, goes into the furnace but gets settled at the bottom. At the bottom there is a drainage valve which requires to be opened some six months to one year when they have to clean the whole tank.

Not that, the upper of the drain pipe is generally used to pumping the things to the furnace while the lower drain pipe should not be opened in any case because that should be opened only when they are to completely empty the entire tank after six months or one year for draining. Not only that. There were three valves. All the three valves in a series were found open. After that the oil would come through the oil separator. Whatever water will be there, will go down and that oil which flows, will be again recirculated. The entire oil separator got over-flooded. And after that, they went to the drain. That drain is also not on the river side. Previously, I was thinking perhaps, on the river side some tank was leaking. But the river side tank was not leaking. The tank was situated near the railways siding which is completely opposite to the direction of the Bokaro Steel Plant. That means in more than one mine the drain has gone through Bokaro Steel Plant and it did not attract the attention of anybody. I would like to know what is the efficiency of the management. For three days, from 2nd to 5th April it has gone, it was detected 40 kms downstream when the entire Damodar water got polluted. Then only, that too after 12 hours you could elect as to what was happening there. For a full three day it flowed. It is not that you have not got your operators there. Your chageman is there, you superintendent of that particular raw material handling plant is there, you general managers are there. When I visited there, I was accompanied by the General Manager. When I asked as to how much oil had gone into the Damodar river, he said he did not have any information or knowledge. I said, do you know how much furnace oil was unloaded and how much still is there? He did not know even that. But the idea I got was that 400 tonnes furnace oil was there and all these 400 tonnes of furnace oil had gone into the river.

I would like to say a word about the pollution effect. Generally the oil parts per million (PPM) should not be more than 10. But as per my information in no case it should be above 1 PPM. But the composition of the river water of Damodar 40 kms. downstream



from where they take water for the consumption of the entire industrial belt-on 2nd April was 10 PPM. It is generally known as milligram per litre also. On 3rd it was 10 PPM. On 4th it was 10 PPM. On 5th it was 3000 PPM. From 10 PPM it shot upto 3000 PPM ! On 6th April it was 2256 PPM. On 7th it was 68 PPM and on 7th again it was 160 PPM. On 8th April it was 18 PPM. But still it is much above the safety limit.

In the Durgapur laboratory they said that the effect of this has even crossed the Bihar border and reached West Bengal. There they made an analysis and found that there was no arsenic in the water. Otherwise it would have been even more poisonous. But there were other components of furnace oil which were equally dangerous to the human health. It was analysed in the laboratory and the components were: Fluoranthene-1.00; Pyrene-0.38; Benz (a) Anthracene-1.76; Benzo (b) fluoranthene-0.47; Benzo (e) Pyrene-0.38; Benzo (a) Pyrene-0.93 and Benzo (ghi) Perylene-2.03. All these are very very harmful to any human health.

You have seen the seriousness of this. On 8th the Bihar Government telephonically contacted the West Bengal Government. The Chief Secretary of Bihar contacted the Chief Secretary of West Bengal to tell him to stop water supply even in the downstream of West Bengal. That means, in Raniganj and Durgapur—the entire Bengal Coalfields—he asked him to stop the water supply. Now, they have failed to arrest the flow of the polluted water. One news item has come in yesterday's Statesman, which says that a five member team of experts will be leaving for Dhanbad, Bihar to assess the extent of spill of furnace oil into the river Damodar which would cause environmental hazard in the neighbouring areas. It also says that the international assistance may be sought to arrest the oil flow at the DVC's Panchet Reservoir from where the water is channelized into the districts of South Bengal, including adjoining Burdwan.

Sir, it is not only that. The entire aquatic life has got affected. its Staff Correspondent

rom Durgapur adds that the aquatic life in the river Damodar is threatened owing to the presence of thick layer of furnace oil. Many customers refused to purchase fish which was caught from the river Damodar, complaining that even after cooking, a foul smell of kerosene oil continued to persist. Mr. Sumentu Guha, Managing Director of Durgapur Project Limited said that the authorities were worried that if the aquatic life in the river had really been affected....

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do not quote what others said.

SHRI A.K. ROY: He said that if the aquatic life in the river had really been affected, the extent of pollution would be much more than what had been feared earlier. No official report in this regard had reached so far. But the authorities were keeping their fingers crossed. This is the situation, Sir. the oil not only had got drained, but also polluted the Damodar water in such a way that the industrial belt of both Bihar and Bengal has got affected. Now, this is being treated very lightly. For this, they have no explanation at all. That is why, I ask this: how you are managing the factory? how could such things take place which continued for three full days together? what were the safety arrangements? when I visited the place, I raised this question: what safety arrangements are there, if there is a leak in the tank. There should be some safety device so that you can monitor from the controlling panel. By this, you can know, if something goes on wrongly. There was nothing like that. When I visited, they said that they are controlling the drainage. But, I saw that thick layer of oil was still going into the river, even on 8th. I would like to request the hon. Minister not to take such things very lightly because the whole thing is getting drained and people are not aware of this. It is something very serious. It is an offence against the country; against the management; against everyone. I want to bring this to your notice. It is a national question. Sir, were are worrying about this Plant now, because it is the most prestigious Plant and the biggest Plant. It is still yielding profit and it is the only Plant

[Sh. A.K. Roy]

which has produced about 2.3 million tonnes of steel. It is giving a good performance. But there is always, an attempt from the managerial side and other things, in such a way that alarm everyone, who are interested in the progress of the Plant. We were thinking to make it a 10 million tonnes Plant, earlier. But it has gone this way. I would like to bring to your notice a Question put by me, on this subject last year, in this House.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have already consumed 18 minutes

SHRI A.K.ROY: I will finish in two minutes.

Sir, then, he gave me an answer also. In September last year a truck with iron scrap was coming out and in between some people were stopping that and taking the steel scrap from that. It was the planned arrangement. We were surprised to know as to how could such things take place. We drew the attention of the Bokaro Steel Plant Management regarding how the trucks loaded with steel scrap which are on the way from Bokaro to Durgapur were being stopped just after 8 kms. from the factory and a portion of the scrap was taken out and sold just like in a regular market. Ultimately, the villagers, with the help of the District administration, found that each and every truck which used to come out of the Bokaro Steel Plant used to carry more steel than what was recorded in the papers so that at the time of delivery at Durgapur they delivered only the recorded portion and the extra quantity were unloaded in this way. It was brought to the notice of the BSP Management. But there was no action taken. They admitted that more than one lakh metric tonne of steel scrap was despatched by the Bokaro Steel Plant and cases were registered. This answer was given on 30th March, 1990. This incident brings out the appalling conditions and its callousness towards health and national money. This also brings out a sort of conspiracy and subversion. With what motive was it done? This is definitely a slur on the mana-

gerial efficiency of such a big plant. There would be an enquiry by a three-Member Committee. But this is not adequate since this is a much bigger issue. I want some high power committee to go into this matter involving representatives from public or some judicial person so that they can go into the matter deeply and do something to stop and check the entire managerial lapses. Secondly, they should make an assurance before the House that no water or oil will go from Bokaro Steel Plant to the Damodar river without passing through a separation tank so that the entire oil or water will be separated and purified. Thirdly, there must be a centrally sponsored pollution control device to operate in the entire industrial belt where so many public sector units are at work and are polluting the entire Damodar river. With these words, I remind the hon. Minister again not to take this matter lightly. This is an offence which is as serious as any offence which the extremists are committing in the North-East or North-West.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMASHRAY PRASAD SINGH (Jahanabad): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a serious issue, not because it disturbed the public life or many people became its victim but because it was a preplanned and high level conspiracy. The tanker which was full of furnace oil had all its three valves opened while in normal circumstance just one valve is opened and two in the case of fire etc. but never three. So it is a matter of surprise. Hence, it becomes crystal clear that it is a conspiracy hatched to ruin and defame the public sector. Therefore, it is a matter of great concern.

The reply given by the Minister is re-reo-type. He gave no reply to the question as to when Government came to know about it, through newspapers or earlier. It is an acknowledged fact that there are people within the Government and outside who are hell-bent upon destroying the public sector and thereby to prove that since public sector is not efficient, private sector should be preferred.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the bungling in oil is not new. It is a daily affair and the loss is not just Rs. 6 lakhs but it is at least Rs. 13 crores, the daily loss being Rs. 10 lakhs.

Sir, the continued leakage and outflow of oil for such a long period may have been due to a joint conspiracy of private sector and some political parties and a lot of other people. It is true that Shri S.P. Protshiyar, the administrative manger is an honest person and has expressed his surprise over the opening of valves. Who was entrusted with the management of all such things? How all the three valves were opened? Is a register maintained regarding the time of opening and closure of valves? The Hon. Minister admitted that a blunder was committed but is not just a blunder but a conspiracy as it involves a large number of people.

All this indicates that some people are out to malign public sector.

As regard the Managing Director, he still continues to hold his post despite numerous allegations against him. These things should be looked into by the people who claim that they are running the nation. This is how the nation is being run. All the allegations against him have been dumped and he has been allowed to continue. It is said that he has links with top persons including Tatas. Thus there is an all round attempt to malign the public sector.

Again, according to C.I.D. officials some outsiders were found roaming there. Those people should be identified. So I request that a Committee should be formed consisting of technical persons and honourable Members to look into these matters and allegations as it would strengthen out nation and help the sagging economy as well. It is not just a question of death and disease due to leakage and outflow of oil, people are dying here due to other reasons also, but it is a question involving the nation's economy and industry. How far can be let them go? The rhetoric of congress-conspiracy would not do any more as the congress is no more at the helm of affairs. Now, you have been sent here to look

into these matters and take care of persons at fault. Many irregularities are there. The factory has its own workshop and despite this the motors are repaired in a private company named Harinarayan & Co. owned by a congress man called P.N. Tripathi. It incurs an expenditure of Rs. 3 crores on the factory. It that is so what is the justification for maintaining an establishment there. The people indulging in such practices in a private factory would be immediately punished and dismissed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, R.S. Bhatia is the Resident Manager there for the last 9 years, despite the fact that he has bought three flats with the money received through bribe. He has rented even the sales office. I wish to tell you all such things as we are discussion not only oil leakage but the general state of affairs in Bokaro, so that you may come to know the people there who are hell bent up on destroying Bokaro. Presently Bokaro is a great national asset. Therefore, I would like to request that a Committee should be formed and its report tabled before the House so that such people may be identified and isolated henceforth. This would help a lot in toning up our country's economy.

[English]

SHRI PURNA CHANDRA MALIK (Durgapur): The river Damodar is one of the most important rivers of our country. It flows through Bengal and Bihar. On the Damodar bank, there are Bokaro Steel Plant, ISSCO, DSP, ASP, DTPS, DPL, BCL, FCI, Raniganj Paper mills, hundreds of collieries and other ancillary industries. These industrial concerns used the water of the river Damodar. Millions of people living in Bihar and Bengal use the water of Damodar river for drinking and other domestic purposes.

Sir, the spill of furnace oil has caused great panic among the people living in this region. I am told that the pollution from Durgapur Steel Plant has already endangered the lives of the people living in that region. My previous speakers have spoken

[Sh. Purna Chadra Malik]

in detail about the hazards of the pollution.

I would only like to know from the Hon. Minister whether it is an act of deliberate sabotage on the part of some officials who are trying to discredit the Government.

I would further like to know whether accountability would be fixed and the concerned officials punished for causing such grave danger to public life and safety.

I would like to know whether the Government will institute an inquiry by high power Committee into the allegations that there is always a deliberate leakage of furnace oil which is extremely costly and the dishonest traders in collusion with the officials mop up the upper layer with gunny bags and then sell it in the market.

14.00 hrs.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY (Alipurduars): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very serious matter. My information is that the Managing Directors and others who are running the company are not very careful as they should have been. It is because the Company Law Board or for that matter any other Government machinery cannot touch their activities. So, they are doing whatever they want to do.

In 1988, the Company Law (Amendment) Bill was introduced. In that a new Section 621A was introduced. It empowered the Company Law Board and the Regional Directors to compound an offence punishable with fine, i.e. by imposing penalties, in lieu of prosecution. The power to compound is not exercisable relating to offences which are punishable either with imprisonment or fine or both. So, this way, the Government is powerless. The Act does not say anything further against the Directors and the Management of any Company.

As the time at our disposal is very short, therefore, I would just draw the attention of

the hon. Minister for law to see that such person who are working in the public sector companies be punished and if need be, this Company Law (Amendment) Bill be again amended so that such persons be brought to book and also punished equally as any other person of the country.

Now, I would just put some questions which the hon. Minister may answer, when he replies.

- (1) May I know whether it is a fact that Coal Mine Area Development Authority felt that the spill was resulted because of inefficiency, lack of knowledge, carelessness and no regard for environment. Further, they have accused the Steel Authority that they have not acquired sufficient talents to operate the outlets and valves of the newly constructed furnace oil tanks. Out of 22 tanks commissioned on March 22, this years, 3 outlets remain partially open since April 2.
- (2) May I know whether it is a fact that the Managing Director of the Plant Mr. S.R. Ramakrishnan had told that it is a sabotage and a deliberate act? He had denied the allegation that the workers like operational work at any Steel Plants. There are 120 similar valves in the entire network of the plant.
- (3) May I know whether the Government possesses any power to confer deterrent punishment to the person or persons who is or who are found responsible for this ghastly or deliberate act of sabotage. They may be political people or anybody for that matter.
- (4) May I know whether the Aquatic life of the river. Damodar is on the verge of total extinction.
- (5) May I know whether some private company has been entrusted to

check the daily purification of water of the Damodar river and what is the name of the company?

[Translation]

SHRI PREM PRADEEP (Nawada): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the leakage of the furnace oil into the waters of Damodar river is an event analogous to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy that took the toll of thousands of people and I am at a loss to understand a to where shall such events and acts of sabotage lead out nation and its people to, if they are allowed to continue. It seems that we have not learnt any lesson from the Bhopal Gas Tragedy otherwise such a mishap of the leakage of furnace oil would not have taken place. It is extremely surprising that the leakage continued for full 3 days and the oil spread upto the length of not less than 40 kilometer and we came to know of all that through the newspapers alone.

The photograph of the spread oil has been given in the newspaper 'Aaj' published from Ranchi and the amazingly reluctant management woke up dazed from the deep slumber of intoxicating affluence only when an appeal from the public for protection and safety from the possible environmental hazards, caused by the widespread spread of the oil, struck their ears and the management guessed that they could not more conceal the incident. It is only after that that they informed the Government of West Bengal and the Central Government regarding the whole episode. We are not aware of the fact whether the hon. Minister has visited the site of the incident. It is said that while Rome was burning, the King- Neero was relaxing totally unconcerned about the whole tragedy. We want to know as to where the hon. Minister was camping at that time? It is after all these happenings and after we moved a call-attention motion that this incident was shared with us in the form of a statement in this House. I would like to add something to what has already been said by my hon. friends here. Little significance can

be attached to issues like the estimate of loss in crores, the probable death toll of the people and of the aquatic animals including fishes etc, but the question is what remains the top secrecy behind all that which has not been brought to light till now. The whole industrial area extending from Dhanbad to Durgapur would have been badly affected. In this connection, I would like to say that though the management personnel might have passed examinations after reading voluminous books but the lessons of national value and importance remain to be taught to them. It is only because of such lapses on the part of the officials that these hazardous incidents resulting in huge national loss have taken place. Hundreds of people have been killed either due to the explosion of gas cylinders or due to fire. Now, you see, how this news has been undermined by the press. The management have, registered a case of theft on 10th of April at the local police station and they defend themselves by saying that the outlet of the furnace was opened wide by the culprits to facilitate theft and this is how the furnace oil leaked out. The management has not, that way, confessed its mistake. Had they admitted their fault, things would have been different and it seems that the Government is very anxious about it now. The hon. Minister is here with us and he shall have to tell us how long can such national losses be permitted to occur? The previous Government has stepped down and many incidents of fire have taken place within just one week. Are we meant to discuss here the issues and incidents of fires, train-fires and explosions of gas cylinders alone or there is also need on the part of the Government to take precautionary measures to check the recurrence of such mishaps? So, I would like to urge upon the Government to take an initiative in this direction and discover the facts and reasons behind such acts so that the nation can be saved from suffering such losses in future. And it is only then that we would be able to take stock of such upheavals and control them. Otherwise, in view of the way the situations shape themselves in Kashmir, Punjab, Bihar or, for that matter, any other part of the country; it is very difficult

[Sh. Prem Pradeep]

to foretell at what time exactly is the situation likely to explode with a bang? Any catastrophic transformation in the present situation can be expected any time if we are reluctant to learn lessons from these experiences. So, we shall have to take an honest overall review of the whole situation and see to it if there is the hand of conspirators or intriguers behind it. That how can the Government be held guilty for the valve getting accidentally opened and the subsequent leakage of oil are such lame excuses as would not do because this is not the case of a natural calamity or God's will. Therefore, by confiding and depending more on your hard-work, strength and vigour and intellectual capacity rather than by blaming God, things can be achieved. Please don't go blindly by the dictum that 'things happen because God wishes them to happen'. Thank you.

[English]

14.12 hrs.

[SHRI JASWANT SINGH *in the Chair*]

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: I am grateful to the hon. members who have participated in the Calling Attention. I am also grateful to Shri A.K. Roy who initiated the discussion; he has raised some very important points and also visited Bokaro Steel Plant and interacted with the Management immediately after the occurrence. He has complained that I have attempted to dilute the seriousness of this issue. Let me assure him and other members of the House that there is no attempt to dilute the seriousness of this issue. The real issue is not whether the loss has been Rs. 6 lakh or more. The fact remains that there could have been casualties of people, there could have been loss of human lives or there could have been serious injuries to human lives if the water level was not low; luckily the water level was low at that time; the pollution was not caused to that extent in the water or that was prevented. I have only stated the fact at the present moment

All the members said that three valves were opened. These valves were not opened regularly; these valves are meant to be opened once in a year when there is total cleaning. The Bokaro has been in operation for the last 20 years and this kind of accident has not taken place so far. It is not possible for these valves to open themselves under some pressure. There are human elements who open these valves personally and allow the furnace oil to flow. It cannot be in the interest of the Management also to allow this furnace oil to flow, because the Management does not gain anything. Therefore, I find it very difficult to believe that there could be any interest on the part of the Management to open them. There are only two possibilities. (1) Either this was done in order to have some pecuniary benefits by way of theft or there must have been some mischief played by somebody. It looks unlikely that it was done in order to have some pecuniary benefits through theft because, as I said, 200 thousand litres of furnace oil flowed. It requires some very huge operation to do it either by a tanker or something else to collect this furnace oil from the top of the water and to carry it away. Obviously, such operations were not there. But I am not ruling them out. Maybe somebody or a group of persons wanted to steal a small quantity of furnace oil. He did not know, or that group of persons did not know that if these valves were kept open, 200 litres of furnace oil might flow by; that possibility is there. But there is a greater possibility of mischief making also.

Point have been raised by members that there is an attempt to discredit the Bokaro Management; there is an overall attempt to discredit even the public sector. Therefore, somebody must have deliberately opened these valves. These valves are generally not opened. Therefore, the Management was caught completely unaware. It is very difficult for the Management now to find out as to who has done it. There were some unauthorised persons reportedly loitering over there, under suspicious circumstances in that area a few days prior to this occurrence. We have filed an FIR. We have also asked the police



*Draining of large quantity**Bokaro Steel Plant*

to go into it in-depth and find out the persons who could have been involved in this operation of opening of these valves. Fortunately, it has not resulted in the loss of human lives.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum): Have you found out about it?

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: I do not know. It is for the police to find out about it. *(Interruptions)*

I do not know. It is for the Police to find out. Bokaro Management had lodged a complaint.

Now, it has been said that the Bokaro Steel Plant management rushed there only on 10-4-1990. It is not correct. The Bokaro Steel Plant management rushed there to the spot on 5-4-1990. And immediately on getting the information at about 5.30 P.M. on 5th April the Bokaro Steel Plant took action. As the hon. member has said there were many plugs—actually there are hundreds of plugs and valves—and it was not possible immediately to locate the particular plug or valves and the leakage was located and plugged within five hours at 2230 hours.

Now, a point has been made that even now the water is contaminated. This is a point on which I particularly took interest. I tried to find out what the present position was and whether there was any contamination. I have been assured that it is not so any longer. The Government of West Bengal as also from the Government of Bihar Bokaro Management got reports and according to that report there has been no pollution at the present moment and things are quite normal both on the West Bengal side and Bihar. They have also been told that the gauge for indicating water normalcy has been showing oil content less than ten PPM which is below the permissible norm since 10-4-90.

We have also sent two experts Mr. A.K. Poddar and Mr. John Raju from the Damodar Valley all the way down to the point of water pumping. Water pumping to Dhanbad is also normal. When it came to our notice we

took all precautionary measures by barricading the water and also realising fully well the difficulties that the people face if water supply were not there, we took steps that were possible within our limited means to supply as much water as possible through tankers. If I am not wrong I think we provided tankers which made hundred of rounds to distribute of water. We also supplied truck loads of galvanized sheets, wooden baleies, Manila ropes, and pumps, empty drums, etc., which were required for barricading the water.

It is also a fact that this kilu No. 7 of the Refractory Plant was not performing since the first of April and that it might have led to some complacency. It has been said that this could not have been detected for two days. Now, what happened is that the system in the oil separation plant was totally closed and it was not possible to say by visual observation that the flow of oil took place. Every 15 days the system is checked. I am not very satisfied after this occurrence about the checking after every 15 days. I feel we shall have to do something on this. It appears that in this probably greater caution could have been taken. I am trying at my own level to find out as to whether there has been my negligence on management's part.

Now, an hon. Member has raised this question, why there has been only a departmental inquiry. I can assure the hon. Member that after the report of the departmental enquiry is received,—and I have impressed upon them that this report must be supplied to me at the earliest—if I feel it necessary then I will go in for a further inquiry to see that this does not take place again.

Now, Mr. Roy has also complained, if I am correct, that after this occurrence we are thinking of taking international assistance. The fact is not so. The Government had already asked for international assistance in this matter to get some special know-how and it has been decided to go in for computerised analysis of the flow to avoid pollution. The equipment is on the way. Therefore, all the steps in this direction have been taken



[Sh. Dinesh Goswami]

long time back. The only thing was that the assistance from the international consultancy agency from whom we are taking assistance, is on the way. As I said, the required equipment is on the way and it will take some time for us to get that equipment.

Another hon. member has also raised some point and asked as to whether I went to the place of occurrence. I must frankly say and concede that I could not do so. On that particular day, that is, the day of occurrence, I was not here. On that day I was abroad accompanying the President of India. After all, it was not possible for me to know that such an occurrence would take place. Therefore, obviously it is not that I was fiddling when Rome was burning. After coming back, whatever steps could have been taken, from my end, I had taken. The Government will direct SAIL to study all implications of it and to take all preventive measures. I feel that there has been some weakness in this because nothing has happened for twenty years. So, there might be some carelessness. Therefore, we will identify weakness in the system of pollution control and we will continue to monitor. We will take whatever steps are considered necessary to make improvement in this. I will not use the word 'fool-proof' because whatever we do it will not be fool-proof. But whatever is possible on our part to tackle such a situation, we will do.

I can add that the Bihar Pollution Control Board has given directions under Section 5 of the Environment Protection Act 1986 to Bokaro Steel Plant Management on 12th April 1990, to close the refractory plant till all the details are furnished. We are awaiting the report of the police because we have lodged FIR and also the report of the interim enquiry. I take the House into confidence. After these reports are received, I can assure the House that whatever steps are necessary would be taken in this direction. We will also see that if there has been any lapse on the part of Bokaro management we would take to task those people. Also other

steps, preventive measures to the possible extent to be taken in future, will be taken.

A reference was also made to a case regarding trucks full of scrap bound for Durgapur or so. We have registered a case and the case is under registration. We have taken the steps for police case registration. Mr. Roy is smiling. I have got great regards for him. I will also like to have cooperation from the hon. Members. They have thrown some suggestions. Whatever other suggestions they will give to me either in writing or in discussions to improve matters in this direction or even in the general administration of Bokaro, they are always welcome.

Some points have been raised regarding over all Bokaro management. But since the scope of Calling Attention Motion is limited, I will not go into those aspects. Obviously we will have opportunities to discuss those aspects on some other occasion.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY: You have not answered my question.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: So far as your pointed question is concerned, regarding legal steps to be taken, there is no shortcoming in law. There are a number of laws available under which we can take steps. The moment we can identify the persons, I can assure you, the steps under the law will be taken against those persons.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY: What about the aquatic life of the Damodar river?

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: So far as the aquatic life is concerned, obviously when the water is polluted, I think, one can conclude that there will be some effect on the aquatic life. But what has been the effect, I will not be able to tell just now.

SHRI A.K. ROY: I want only one minute. Please allow me.

MR CHAIRMAN: It is not a question of one minute. The hon. Minister has already replied. I cannot continue to give permission

for question and answer. Kindly resume your seat.

SHRI A.K. ROY: I will take only one minute. Then, I will resume my seat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I cannot. You have had full opportunity to discuss the entire matter.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Mr. Roy, please write to me. I will examine it and write to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a Motion standing in the name of Shri Saifuddin Choudhury.

14.24 hrs.

[English]

#### BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

##### Sixty Report

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY (Katwa): I beg to move:

"That this House do agree with the Sixth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 17th April, 1990."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is

"That this House do agree with the Sixth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 17th April, 1990."

*The motion was adopted*

14.25 hrs.

#### MATTER UNDER RULE 377

[English]

- (i) **Need to enhance the compensation to the families of IPKF personnel who lost their lives in Sri Lanka**

✓ SHRIMATI M. CHANDRASEKHAR (Sriperumbudur): Our nation is proud of the Indian Peace Keeping Force for the suc-

cessful accomplishment in bringing peace and normalcy in the North-Eastern region of Sri Lanka. The sacrifices made and the exemplary courage, fortitude and devotion to duty shown by the Jawans, officers and other ranks of IPKF are highly commendable. The IPKF provided security to the Tamils in Sri Lanka and shouldered the onerous task of combating the ethnic and civil war in the North-Eastern region of Sri Lanka.

About 1155 IPKF men had sacrificed their lives while providing security and saving the life and property of the innocent Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The last batch of IPKF men numbering about 2500 had returned to India on 25 March, 1990. The President of Sri Lanka thanks the Government of India for honouring the pledge for withdrawing the entire IPKF men from the Island. But not even a word has been said about the yeomen services rendered by the IPKF.

It would, therefore, be in the fitness of things that the nation should pay homage to the brave and valiant men who laid down their lives for the sake of humanity in the North-Eastern part of Sri Lanka. The Government should raise the minimum compensation to the bereaved families of IPKF on par with those families whose compensation has been raised recently.

- (ii) **Need to construct a direct railway line between Tumkur and Davanagere in Karnataka**

SHRI C.P. MUDALA GIRIYAPPA (Chitradurga): The railway line between Tumkur and Davanagere via Arasikere, Kadur Chikka Jajuru is a round about route. There is a proposal to construct a direct rail track between Tumkur and Davanagere via Sira, Hiriyur, Chitradurga. In fact, this is a missing railway link in the railway map of Karnataka. This direct route would reduce the distance between these two stations by about 100 kms and the duration of the journey would be reduced by about four hours. This would also facilitate to lessen the traffic pressure on