

12.9 1/2 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF
URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

[*English*]

**Situation arising out of spillage of
furnace oil due to collision of two ships
on the high seas**

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora): I call the attention of the Minister of Environment and Forests to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:-

"The situation arising out of spillage of furnace oil due to collision of two ships on the high seas and the steps taken by the Government to tackle the serious problem of pollution on the Western Coast".

12.10 hrs.

[MR DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI): A Tanker 'Puppy', Malta Flag ship collided with 'World Quince' in position 1334.6 North and 6032.0 East, which is 725 nautical miles South-South West of Bombay, at 1534 hrs. (IST) on 28th June, 1989. Two cargo tanks on board MT Pump were damaged, as a result it was understood that the oil cargo commenced leaking from these tanks on 28th June, 1989 at collision point and continued till 2nd July, 1989. The ship sustained structural damage on its port side and was at one time reported to be in danger of breaking into two. However, subsequently a British ship 'RENOWN' was reported to be escorting the ship to Bombay and an Omani tug ORIONCO was also reportedly on its way to assist the damaged MT Puppy.

The report was first received by Coast Guard Regional Headquarters (West) around noon on 1st July, 1989. Commander Coast Guard Region (West) immediately alerted

the Coast Guard, Pollution Response Team at Bombay, and lightering equipment was made to stand by to tranship the oil cargo to another vessel. Bombay Port Trust was also requested to direct ship to anchor at outer anchorage in Northern portion of Bombay outer harbour keeping out-side 12 miles limit, i.e., beyond territorial water.

MT Puppy arrived Bombay 2nd July and anchored North West of Bombay floating light at a distance of 17.5 miles. In spite of bad weather the Coast Guard Helicopter was able to winch down two Coast Guard Officers on board the damaged ship for preliminary assessment of damage, extent of repairs required, likely lightering operation to off load leaking oil if any and to assess pollution hazard. The preliminary investigation revealed that an oil slick in multiple patches was occurred along the route which threatened coastal waters.

From the records recovered from the tanker, it was estimated that 5500 metric tonnes of oil and spilled by the ship at sea around the collision point (830 miles from West Coast of India) and during its passage to Bombay. While at anchorage off Bombay, approximately 2 tonnes of furnace fuel oil leaked into the sea due to wave action. The oil slick trajectory was noticed from Bombay floating light to Arnala and Bombay harbour area. This area was being kept under surveillance by Coast Guard Helicopters and aircraft.

The ship remained at anchorage off Bombay till 1130 hrs. on 5th July, 1989 and was on her passage to Oman escorted by a tug. Coast Guard regional Headquarters, (West) were carrying out aerial surveillance to ensure that the ship did not spill any more oil while on passage from Bombay to Oman. Certain patch up repairs were understood to have been carried out while the ship was at anchorage off Bombay.

Oil slick was noticed in the Bombay harbour area and on the coast near Breach Candy. This oil pollution had occurred from the two tonnes which leaked from MT Puppy

[Sh. Z. R. Ansari]

when it was anchored. This was brought under control and eliminated by the Indian Coast Guard with the assistance of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board.

However, it was feared that the 5,500 tonnes which leaked on high seas was moving towards the coast of Maharashtra and Gujarat at a rate of 20 nautical miles per day.

A high-level team was deputed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to Bombay on 11th July, 1989. The team had a detailed discussion with the Government of Maharashtra. Commander of the Indian Coast Guard, Chairmen of the Pollution Control Boards of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala, the Chief Secretary of Goa and the Administrator of Lakshadweep who were called to the meeting. The Director General, Shipping, the Bombay Port Trust, the National Institute of Oceanography and the Merchant Marine Department and the oil and Natural Gas Commission were also present.

It transpired at the meeting that the major slick was yet to be located in spite of the efforts of the Indian Navy, the Indian Coast Guard and the National Remote Sensing Agency via satellite. Perhaps the slick had already dispersed in the stormy sea and it might appear only as tar-balls after a few months on the coast.

The Regional Contingency Committee for the purpose already functions under the Indian Coast Guard who are responsible for marine environment. The Committee including the Director General, Shipping, Oil and Natural Gas Commission, etc. The Committee was given a time-bound programme to locate the oil slick and also implement the action plan with them.

The Regional Contingency Committee and the Expert Team from the Ministry of Environment again reviewed the position after a week in Bombay. The Indian Coast Guard continued the vigil. The National

remove Sensing Agency, Hyderabad, tried to locate the slick through satellite. A vessel of the National Institute of Oceanography also sailed in the area to locate the oil slick. But the oil slick could not be located so far.

[*Translation*]

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has referred to a very serious situation in his statement. He has concluded the statement with the words and I quote:

[*English*]

"But the oil slick could not be located so far."

[*Translation*]

In spite of all possible means available with us at present and best possible efforts, we have not been able to locate the area of the major oil slick and could not assess the quantum of the oil leaked, the velocity of the oil slick and the extent of the damage likely to be caused by it, it is in itself a matter of serious concern. Since the oil started leaking from the tanker, no efforts were made for its repair until it reached Bombay coast. The hon. Minister also has not made any reference to this effect in his statement, whether efforts could have been made to undertake the repair of the leaking tanker or was it impossible to do so? As per the press reports, it was possible to undertake repair. It was possible to plug the leakage of oil. So far only a negligible quantity of oil has reached the coastal waters of Bombay and it is reported that the sea in the region is getting adversely affected. We have high stakes in this area because a large number of oil rigs of the ONGC are stationed there. When the entire slick reaches there, it will cause a heavy damage. The hon. Minister has stated that the oil slick is moving towards the coast of Bombay and Gujarat at a rate of 20 nautical miles per day. This may worsen the situation even more. Such a situation has given rise to a special type of emergency conditions. The heavy oil spillage from one

tanker could threaten the marine life of the coastal waters and also the population of Bombay. The oil installations could also be similarly damaged. I would like to know about the measures likely to be taken at present to overcome the current crisis. It is not only necessary to control the situation but also to avert the possible danger connected with it. So far as I know, all the agencies involved in tackling this problem whether the Shipping Corporation of India or the Coast Guard Organisation, everyone of the is interested in passing the buck on the pretext that this work is outside their jurisdiction and therefore they are not in a position to undertake it. They are trying to escape their responsibility although you have stated that a Regional Contingency Committee for the purpose has already been constituted. I would like to know whether this committee is there merely for monitoring the situation or does it exist for ensuring effective operation as well. If it is functioning for merely collecting and providing information, then I think that the position is not very satisfactory. However, if this committee is vested with all the necessary powers to deploy its capacity for meeting all possible emergency conditions and control the situation by affecting proper coordination between different agencies, then it is a welcome step. As per my information, none of the agencies are equipped with the required multi-purpose fire fighting vessels. Under the given circumstances, if such vessels are available with any other coastal countries, is it under the consideration of the Government to acquire the same from them? The Arabian sea is an open area. It is a throughfare for ships moving from one end of the world to the other corner of it. Hence, this sort of risk may continue to exist. Similar situations arise with our own ONGC vessels in our region. The recent incident involved a foreign vessel. Such an oil spillage occurs when ships which are in a shattered conditions are made to carry oil cargo by foreign companies out of sheer negligence. Some international law should be there for controlling such situations so that due compensation may be given to the affected parties by the companies responsible for causing damage and the amount spent in this regard may be

recovered from them. There should be some ban or restrictions on them to act as deterrent. Does any such international law exist and if not, will the Government of India take the initiative of negotiation with other countries for the enactment of such a law? The Minister of Environment should take note of it as to what extent it has polluted the ocean? Its responsibility should not be limited to the aspect of environmental pollution alone. In this matter, rather it should shoulder the entire responsibility right from taking measures for the control of pollution to the minimisation of damage and ensuring that due compensation is granted. If this Ministry is of the view that its responsibility does not go beyond the aspect of environmental pollution in this matter, the Coast Guard Organisation will also say that it comes under Ministry of Defence and the ONGC will say that they are covered under the Ministry of Petroleum. The slick is not confined to Bombay alone but it has been reported recently in a newspaper published from Lakshwdeep that slick is moving towards this group of islands. The marine life of the coastal waters of these tiny islands is being threatened. Under the circumstances a very unfortunate situation will be created. It is difficult to say whether the Ministry of Environment and Forests will be able to gain control over the whole situation.

[English]

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE (Bombay North Central): It is a matter of deep concern for the country that even though exactly one month has passed since the collision occurred on 28th June, 1989 between two ships 725 nautical miles South-West of Bombay, even today the Minister of Environment and Forests has said that the oil spill could not be located so far.

It is very necessary to take quick action in the matter and to find out the exact location and size of the oil spill. It appears that there is no proper coordination between the Department of Environment and Forests and the coastal guards who are posted on the spot. A very hopeful picture was given by Mr.

[Sh Sharad Dighe]

A C Ray, additional Secretary in the Department of Environment and Forests, New Delhi, that before July 13, it will be possible to identify the spill

He further added on 11th July at Bombay that the action plan would be chalked out the next day and implemented on 15th July. In spite of this announcement, we find that the oil slick could not be located so far. What is happening is several meetings are taking place. A time-bound programme to locate oil slick as also to implement the action plan is merely announced. But in fact it has not been implemented at all. Therefore, I would urge upon the Government and also put a question to the hon. Minister. According to their own estimate when this time bound programme to locate the oil slick and to implement the action plan is going to take place in practice?

Sir, the second serious question which arises is that many experts have expressed their fear that this large oil mass will cause much biological and physiological harm to marine life as also to the fish eaters along the coast. No clarification is being made by the Government regarding this fear expressed by several biological experts in this respect. The result is that since fishing which is a major industry in Bombay and Konkan and tonnes of fish is being exported from Sasoan Dock in Bombay everyday and since fish is a staple food of lakhs of people in the region and since this fear has not been allayed from the quarters of the Government, the fishing industry is suffering to a great extent. The shall fishermen in Bombay are also suffering because of this fear that has been spread in the minds of the public. Many fish-eaters—practically most of them are not going to the fish market at all to buy the fish because of the fear that has been expressed that it will be dangerous for human life. Even some had gone to the extent of saying that it may spread cancer. Therefore, with the fear in mind, the whole fishing industry has come to a standstill as far as Bombay is concerned and a great amount of fear is

spread among the public. Therefore, I would like to know whether the Government is going to clarify the position as far as this rumour and fear that is spread in the cities like Bombay is concerned.

Sir, the third very serious matter is that the Coast Guard and the Mercantile Marine Department allowed this M V Puppy, the tanker involved in the oil-slick, to sail away instead of impounding it and arresting its crew. It has been reported that this ship had an insurance certificate from a London-based Insurance Firm. The papers were seized by the Guards and the claim will be recovered by the Civil Liability Convention as per the certificate. It is also reported that under the CLC, when the tanker owner is strictly liable for pollution damage, he is entitled to limit the liability to 137 dollars per tonne of the ship's tonnage or 14 million dollars whichever is less. According to this calculation, it is said that total claim of about three million dollars may be allowed at the rate of 137 dollars per tonne for 22,000 tonnes. I would like to know whether the Government proposes to make any claim with respect to this and whether the Government will enquire into the matter as to why this Merchant Marine Department and the Coast Guard allowed this 'Puppy' Tanker involved in the slick to sail away instead of impounding it and arresting the crew. What will happen to this claim now which is a serious matter for the Government? What step is the Government going to take? I would also like to know what is estimated cost of the clean-up operation which has place up till now?

Lastly, I would like to know whether there is any contingency plan to combat such an emergency in the country because it appears that there was no quick action in this matter and there was lack of coordination between the Union Government and the persons on the spot, namely, the guards. Therefore, is there any contingency plan that is going to take place or does it still exist to combat such an emergency situation which may arise again in future at any time? With these words, I would like the Minister to clarify on all these points.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA (Balasore): Hon. Deputy-Speaker, Sir I really have great concern about our naval communication system. The accident took place only on 28th June, 1989. But, according to the hon. Minister, our Coast Guards could know about this information on 1st July, which means, after 72 hours of the accident occurred, our Coast Guards could be informed. So, I have my own doubts about our naval communication system. The hon. Minister, in his statement has stated, and I quote:

"Perhaps the slick had already dispersed in the stormy sea and it might appear only as tar-balls after a few months on the coast."

I am not going into details of it. How can the hon. Minister accept disappearance of such slick from the ship? When this had happened, why was the vessel allowed to enter our economic zone? Besides this, the hon. Minister had stated that the ship was moving at 20 nautical miles or so and because of this slow speed, more slick of oil could come out and polluted the sea. Had they not been allowed to come to our economic zone, I think, this type of danger would not have been apprehended. Besides this, the hon. Minister has not mentioned anything about our fire fighting vessels having multi-purpose actions so that they can remove oil. I would like to know whether these types of fire fighting vessels are with us and if so why they have not been engaged in removing the oil.

Regarding the legal action, I would like to know whether there is any system in our country so that we can impose legal action on the owners of such vessels as would cause pollution to our sea water.

My honourable friends have already anticipated such types of dangers to the marine products, besides to the fish industry, as would cause a lot of suffering to the poor and small people who are engaged in fishing trade. They should not be made to suffer much. In this connection may I know whether the Hon. Minister and the Govern-

ment are thinking to impose such type of international regulation so that these types of accidents in future would be well compensated by the concerned vessel owners and the companies which are having such types of vessels?

When the Coast Guard was informed on 1st July, of course our Government took measures to protect the sea water. Why this type of action was not taken earlier so that pollution to the sea water would not have been there at all?

In 1982 we had our ONGC vessel, Sagar Vikas incident. We have also discussions in this House about the incident. The ONGC, the Coast Guard and other agencies which are engaged in this type of work should have been altered after this 1982 incident. Why was this not done? I would like that the Hon. Minister may kindly clarify these points so that the panic created among millions of people in the country is removed.

[Translation]

SHRIG.S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this matter is more serious than what it appears. In Switzerland, the pharmaceutical concern Sandoz had once flushed certain chemicals into the river inadvertently. This created an uproar all over Europe and the shipping industry was in shambles. This Pharmaceutical company had to pay heavy compensation to the Government and to the affected people and for a year long the people did not accept the fish of that river for their food.

Our country is in Third World and falls under the category of underdeveloped nations. That is why such a major tragedy has taken place but the people are totally ignorant about it. The most important point is that this tragedy occurred on the 28th June and the news reached the Government on the 1st of July. A person with even a little common sense would ask whether our people had been silent spectators for 3-4 days how is it that they could not get the information of the accident and why were not the people

[Sh. G.S. Rajhans]

alerted about the situation?

It is quite simple to perceive that when there is an oil slick for 3 or 4 days and that too during the monsoons and whoever has seen the extent of rainfall which takes place during this season or has even visited Bombay during the months of July and August and watched the Arabian sea, would realise that it is quite normal for the spilled oil to spread in different directions and pollute the sea waters. (*Interruptions*)

Shri Rawat, it is a matter of regret that you have raised the matter in the form of a Calling Attention and now the same is being ridiculed by you. If such thing has been happened in any European country, it would have created a furore. But, as this has happened in an underdeveloped country, it is not being taken with that seriousness. You will realise this after the months when the shipping industry will close down in Bombay, Goa, Gujarat or the whole of coastal area. The matter is more serious than what we think it to be.

I know it quite well that the internal law does have a provision for the payment of compensation for polluting the high sea. If a crime of this sort is committed by a ship in the high sea, it becomes the liability of the country whose flag the ship is carrying to get the compensation paid by the company owning the ship. The amount of such compensation, as reported in the press is Rs. 20 thousand dollars per tonne. This fact has been accepted by the Government also that 5,500 tonnes of oil got leaked from it and there is no difference of opinions about it. So India should get at least this much amount. The ship was allowed to be anchored at Bombay Port for a number of days. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it was leaking even at that time or its leak was plugged and the reason why it was allowed to leave the Port? You said that the ship met with an accident and it was feared that it might break into two parts. It was with great difficulty that it sailed to our Port.

I would like to make a specific question to the hon. Minister who has also held the portfolio of Shipping earlier also and therefore the expert knowledge, to enlighten us at to how it happened.

I would also like to submit that as reported in the press that no slick was visible and an expenditure of at least Rs. 100 crore will be incurred for cleaning the water where it was spotted. Contradictory reports have been published in the newspapers and I cannot tell as to what is correct. It has also been stated that efforts for cleaning have been made by the Environment Ministry with the help of chemicals sprayed by helicopters. The hon. Minister alone can tell the correct position but I would only like to submit in brief that in his meeting held with the Chairmen of different ports, it was stated that slick was not visible and that we should forget such a thing. But is it so easy to forget it. The Government tried to locate it with the help of searchlight also but it was not visible. After all where has the slick vanished? It is not a herculean task to locate it since it will be quite separate from water. When oil spills over water in our House it is easily visible, so how is it possible that when 5,500 tonnes of oil spilled over the water of the vast sea, it is not visible at all. I would like to know whether efforts in this field are still continuing or they have come to an end? Will the Government make it clear whether this will damage the sea food or not? If it has become harmful, will any steps be taken to make the people aware of this fact by giving it wide publicity over the radio and television. My submission is that the hon. Minister should give a comprehensive reply.

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI): Sir, before I deal with the specific questions that have been raised by the hon. Members I want to explain the situation. On the high-class there was a collision between this tanker and another merchant ship. I have given the distance in my statement. It was on 28th June. After complete 24 hours the

Captain of the ship gave a SOS message to our coastal guards that they are in trouble and their ship may break into two. With this SOS message it was necessary on humanitarian grounds and also we are duty bound to go in for investigation. Immediately our coastal guards went there and in spite of bad weather they could find that the vessel was sailing at a slow speed. They could drop two of their guards on the ship who found the damage being not much and it was in a position to sail. In the mean time some support was given by some British ship and as the ship was bound for Oman, the Oman tug also assisted them in the sailing of that ship. This ship sailed and wanted permission to anchor. We gave them the reply that we cannot allow them to enter our territorial water, viz., within 12 miles limit. They wanted to anchor the ship in order to get some repairs done so that there is no danger to the life of the crew or any more slick. So, we allowed them to anchor beyond our territorial waters limit and they anchored at about 17.5 nautical miles away. Some minor repairs were made.

Sir, there were two slicks. One slick was 5500 tonnes. The slick was at the point where this tanker collided with another merchant ship. It was on the high seas far far away and we could not get any message about that oil slick nor of that accident. Only on 29th June we got a message that they are in danger and please help us. It was a help call. This fact was unknown to us whether any oil slick to the tune of 5500 tonnes was there at the point of collision. This fact came to our knowledge only on 1st July.

The questions which have been put by the hon. Members are: Why did you allow the ship to anchor? There were many reasons. One was that when any accident takes place and we come to know of that, it becomes our duty that we should do whatever is possible within our resources to give assistance on humanitarian grounds. These are the normal norms. This is the normal ethic which is there. We came to know that there was oil slick. At that point also, there was another slick of two tonnes when it anchored. It was

mainly fuel oil.

The second reason why we allowed this ship to anchor was to see if there was any thing to be done by way of repairs so that while sailing towards Oman it may not discharge some more oil in the nearabout vicinity of our territorial waters which may adversely affect the marine pollution in our areas. That's why we allowed them to anchor. Then, some minor repairs were done and they were allowed to sail. To keep that ship anchored nearer our territorial waters was all the more dangerous and there were risks. Therefore, we allowed it to sail.

As far as 2-tonne oil slick is concerned, all measures have been taken and that oil slick has been cleared. Only marginally, in the rocky areas, some effect is there. The efforts are going on to clear that effect also. They are not sitting idle. Every effort has been made to clear our waters from that oil slick.

The question is of 5,500 tonnes of oil. It is a major quantity of oil slick. If that oil slick reaches our territorial waters, certainly it will be very very dangerous. It will surely create problems. All efforts by organisations like Coastal Guard, Department of Ocean Development, Ministry of Shipping and Transport have been made. The satellite imagery has also been used to locate the oil slick where it has gone. So far, with all those efforts and equipment—satellite, aerial survey and by ship—the traces of the slick could not be found out.

The things which are sometimes bad have sometimes proved to be good also. The hon. Member was talking too much about the Arabian Sea when it is ferocious. During monsoon, when the Arabian Sea is ferocious, it has sometimes helped us in dispersing that oil slick. The scientists have told us that oil is such a thing that when it is put on the surface of the water, it floats with water. But whenever some currents are there and if the currents are strong, then what happens? Because of the warmer weather, and because of the action of the current and

[Sh. Z.R. Ansari]

cross currents, some of the contents which can evaporate do evaporate. And some of those contents just go deeper and settle down the sea. Probably, this would have happened. We are not sure about it. Investigations are still going on. There is no possibility of the oil spill reaching the western coast except North and South Lakshadweep or so. We are on the guard and we have alerted all concerned organisations to see if any traces are found. We will take action which is within our control

There is one question which has been raised and which is about the infrastructure available for meeting such a situation. In any way, we should not feel inferior to the so-called developed countries. As far as the personnel and technology are concerned, I am sure that the Indian technology and the Indian personnel are quite competent to meet such a situation like this. We are proud of our personnel and their scientific knowledge and we are also proud of our arrangements and we have all the equipment which can meet such a situation. We should not be very much worried about it. As far as the effect on marine life, especially that of fish, is concerned, a lot of concern has been shown, and it is quite natural also that everybody is concerned about it. If the fish becomes polluted and if people eat that fish, then naturally, the whole nation will be affected by health hazards. We are concerned about it. Maharashtra Government has already issued a statement that they have got the matter studied by their scientists and we have also got it studied by our scientists. They have learnt that there are no traces of any damage to the fish. There is nothing of that sort that the fish has become so dangerous for human consumption and that they will create health hazards

The next question is regarding compensation. There are two types of liabilities. One is the penal liability and the other is the civil liability. As far as the penal liabilities are concerned, I am afraid, that Malta is not one of the members of the convention through

which any penal liability can be fixed. But certainly civil liability can be fixed and compensation can be claimed. There are clubs and those clubs make good with the compensation, a sort of insurance. They give us bank guarantee and they have said that the Government of India can claim compensation.

M/s Crowe Boda and Company on behalf of P&I Club of the vessel have stated that they are prepared to give a guarantee for a maximum sum up to USD 2.5 lakhs with respect to the pollution caused by the spillage of the two tons of oil by MT Puppy while she was at anchorage off Bombay. With respect to the other major spill in the high-seas, the P&I Club was of the opinion that no substantial pollution would arise from this. However, they have stated that this would not preclude the Government from making additional claims for this oil spillage also if it could be proved that the same has caused pollution in the exclusive economic zone. As far as those two tonnes of spillage is concerned, it is a proved matter, and this guarantee has been given. As regards 5500 tonnes, we could not trace it and, therefore, we cannot fix the responsibility.

13.00 hrs.

That is broadly the picture which I wanted to give. My friend has probably over-emphasised the issue by giving an example of one so-called very very developed country, Switzerland and that we are under-developed. I do not think there is need to emphasise this so much that we are under developed. We are not under-developed. We are a developing country. In the field of science and technology, our scientists and technologies are much above the scientists of developed countries. Then, there cannot be any comparison between Switzerland and India because of many reasons. Switzerland is a cold country. The climatic conditions are not at all helpful there for such accidents. On the other hand, nature is so bountiful with India that the climatic conditions like cyclones, heat etc. are so helpful for meeting such situations. It is the nature which helps us in

this matter. Therefore, no comparison can be drawn between the two countries which are in two different climatic zones.

I do understand the concern which should be there. It is probably because of the Indian temperament, our mental attitude. As far as our equipment and preparedness is concerned, we are fully prepared to meet any situation.

Our scientists have told us that as thirty days have passed, there does not seem to be any possibility of the 5500 tonnes reaching our coastal line. That is the scientific opinion. But nevertheless, we are not going to take any chances; we are on the vigil; our Coastal Guard Organization, which is the nodal agency for this are on the vigil. The Department of Ocean Development, the Ministry of Surface Transport are all on vigil.

One question was raised about the Regional Contingency Committee. This Committee is fully empowered not only to monitor, but to take any action when any emergency arises.

With these few words, I conclude and I hope I have replied all the questions.

DR. G.S. RAJHANS: Are we still making efforts to locate this slick or have we given up efforts?

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI: Yes, we are, Lakshadweep is one of our fragile areas and we cannot afford to risk our fragile area and all the more we are concerned, when we know that it is moving towards south.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Could we use some chemical to minimise the effect?

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI: Yes, we have used chemicals and because of that two tonnes—some of it—went down in the bottom of the sea. But the major thing is that first of all, we have to locate it. As soon as you locate it, we will do whatever is possible to clear our water from the bad effects.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We shall adjourn now for Lunch to meet at 14.05 P.M.

140.5 hrs.

The Lok Sabha adjourned for Lunch till five minutes past Fourteen of the Clock

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at ten minutes past Fourteen of the Clock

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER—in the Chair]

MATTER UNDER RULE 377

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House shall now take up matters under Rule 377. Shri Banwari Lal Purohit.

- (i) **Demand or a 'Yarn Centre' at Nagpur to Let handloom weavers in their region get adequate quality of yarn at reasonable rates**

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT (Nagpur): I would like to draw the attention of the House towards the miserable and pitiable condition of handloom weavers due to non-availability of yarn in the Vidarbha region particularly in Nagpur and Kamptee.

There are thousands of handlooms in the Vidarbha region alone and the handloom weavers have to depend upon the yarn. The handloom weavers are passing through very difficult days due to steep shortage of yarn. There is heavy increase in prices of all types of yarn during the last six months.

The livelihood of workers is totally dependent on handloom. As they are not getting adequate quantum of yarn at reasonable price they are on the verge of collapse and therefore there is an urgent need to provide them yarn in sufficient quantity and at reasonable rates.