

March, 1976 together with an explanatory memorandum.

(ii) The Notified Goods (Prevention of Illegal Import) Amendment Rules, 1976, published in Notification No. G.S.R. 277(E) in Gazette of India dated the 3rd April, 1976 together with an explanatory Memorandum. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-10642/76.]

(2) A copy each of Notification Nos. G.S.R. 439 and G.S.R. 440 (Hindi and English versions) published in Gazette of India dated the 27th March, 1976 issued under the Central Excise Rules, 1944 together with an explanatory memorandum. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-10643/76.]

NOTIFICATIONS UNDER CUSTOMS ACT, 1962

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHATGI): I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of Notification Nos. 62-Customs [G.S.R. 288(E)] and 63-Customs [G.S.R. 289(E)] (Hindi and English versions) published in Gazette of India dated the 7th April, 1976, under section 159 of the Customs Act, 1962 together with an explanatory memorandum. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-10644/76.]

12.01 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED DEATH OF TWO SURVEYORS AND THREE CHAINMEN IN CHASNALA MINE

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah): I call the attention of the Minister of Steel and Mines to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:—

"The reported death of two surveyors and three chainmen in the Chasnala mine on 5th April, 1976 and the steps taken by the Government to prevent such occurrences."

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV): It is with great sorrow that I have to inform the House of an accident at the Chasnala Colliery of Indian Iron and Steel Company Ltd that occurred at about 13.30 hours on the 5th April, 1976.

The Chasnala Colliery was the scene of a major accident on the 27th December, 1975 when the mine was suddenly flooded. The colliery has now been dewatered and action is being taken to recommission it. The House will recall that the last accident occurred because a connection had been established between the mine and the old waterlogged workings nearby. It has now become necessary to construct an underground dam to plug this puncture-point between the old workings and the new mine. The erection of this dam has to be completed before the monsoon. It was considered necessary to undertake a survey to establish the exact extent of the old workings and also help in deciding on the location of the proposed dam. In view of the importance of the matter, a survey was ordered by the Director General of Mines Safety.

On the 5th April, 1976 at about 11.30 a.m., a survey party consisting of two surveyors, five chainmen and one mining sirdar went down No. 4 incline of the mines to fix a survey station for setting the survey instruments. It appears that at about 1-30 p.m. there was a sudden onrush of water through the number 4 incline and the water, flowing down at steep gradient, carried accumulated debris and also swept away the rail line. Out of the eight persons who had gone down, the mining sirdar had come out before the onrush of water. Two more were able to climb out to safety later, and they gave the first information of the accident. Others were unfortunately trapped. Till now three bodies have been recovered. The search work is continuing to locate the other two persons. The Director General of Mines

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Safety and the local Civil and Police authorities were informed and they rushed to the site. *Ex-gratia* payment of Rs. 1,000 is being made to the bereaved families.

The deaths appear to be from injuries received from impact of heavy material flowing with the onrushing water. The Director General of Mines Safety has already ordered an inquiry into the causes of this accident and the enquiry has commenced.

Sir, I must express my deep concern about this fatal accident within months of the earlier ghastly one. The Government have, therefore, decided that the one man Court of Inquiry, which is now going into the earlier accident, will go into this latest accident too. It is unfortunate that this second accident should have occurred at a time when all efforts were concentrated in providing relief and rehabilitation to the victims of the earlier accident.

I am sure, Sir, the House will join me in conveying our grief to the members of the bereaved families for whom on behalf of the Government, I hold out the assurance that everything possible will be done to help them bear their terrible loss.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: The Chasnala tragedy is one of the greatest tragedies in the history of mining accidents in the world. Even before our memory of the recent Chasnala tragedy could fade away, another accident took place. This accident shows how callous is the attitude of the Administration as well as that of the Government towards human life and towards safety measures for the coal-miners. The tragedy becomes far grimmer, taking into consideration the whole background of not only the Chasnala tragedy but also of the fact that, after the Chasnala tragedy, almost weekly reports are appearing in the newspapers of a series of mine accidents. More than 50 deaths have taken place due to mining accidents after the Chasnala tragedy. This shows the

attitude which is still persisting—the old attitude of the employees, the capitalists and the bureaucrats—and the callous negligence towards safety measures. This shows that neither the Colliery Management nor the Government has drawn any lesson from the grimmest tragedy in the Chasnala Colliery. It is well-known that Chasnala is a mine which is called a 'watery mine' and in the statement of the Minister it has been stated that de-watering has been completed. If this is a fact, wherefrom does the water come? In the same statement that has been made by the Minister it has been stated that the onrush of water, all of a sudden, entrapped those people who went down for survey work. Wherefrom did that water come? Wherefrom did the debris come? I think, it was dumped just in the incline. This shows the utter callousness towards safety of the workers because the debris has been allowed to be accumulated in the incline and there has been seepage of water; it is a continuous process. In the statement it has been admitted that you want to construct one dam to plug the point where the puncture took place. To plug the puncture-point you are going to construct one dam, but before plugging that, what is the position? The water is flowing continuously. I had occasion to go underground in the first horizon and I have seen how the water is still coming there. So, I want to know why, without taking appropriate measures of safety, this team was allowed to go down and whether this was permitted by the Directorate of Mines Safety. So far as I know the accumulation of debris was not with the consent of the Directorate of Mines. Who was responsible for this?

It has appeared in today's newspaper, particularly the *Indian Express* that the two persons, who were fortunate enough to escape this tragedy, have lodged one complaint with the authorities, and the content of that complaint is that they demanded removal of water before they were asked to go inside this incline. I want to

know whether it is a fact and if a complaint has been lodged, what actually is the complaint, why was their demand not attended to and why, despite complaints, the workers were forced to go down into the incline for the survey work. Last time I raised a similar question because there were complaints that before that crash in the wall of Chasnala mine on the 27th the workers warned that there was every danger of there being a crash because of the heavy seepage of water. Now, various reasons are being supplied to cover up the real failure of the management and the Government. While one Court of Inquiry is in session, another tragedy has occurred. This is a very serious negligence which calls for serious criticism and which also calls for serious thought on the part of the Government.

After the Chasnala tragedy, I visited Chasnala for the second time and I saw posters about safety-cum-production fortnight. I got a report that, during that safety-cum-production fortnight, production jumped up. The workers have been forced to do more production, but no attention has been paid towards safety measures. During this fortnight, there have been several accidents, and several deaths have taken place. There has been a total negligence so far as safety measures are concerned; the Directorate of Mines Safety has been totally ignored.

I was also informed by some reliable source that the persons who, unfortunately, died due to trapping, were important witnesses before this Court of Inquiry which is in session. If that is a fact, doubts may crop up in the minds of people whether there is any mystery behind this to suppress the evidence. The Minister will have to satisfy us on this and also tell us whether, before the survey team was sent down, the consent or permission of the Directorate of Mines Safety was taken. In general, the Minister's statement says that, for general survey and constructing a dam, the clearance was given by

the Directorate of Mines Safety. When the squad was being sent, they had lodged a complaint that unless dewatering is complete and debris is moved, they should not be sent inside, but their demand was ignored and the squad was sent. I would like to know, whether before sending this squad inside the mine, the Directorate General of Mines Safety was consulted and their permission taken or not. These are all serious things. Various recommendations of previous Commissions of Enquiry on various accidents have been totally ignored and that is why this tragedy has happened.

It is unfortunate that even till today, two bodies have not been recovered and we have no idea, what the actual position of those two bodies is, and whether those will be recovered or like the old Chasnala tragedy, these will remain buried for months together. I hope, the Minister will clarify all these points and gives an assurance that with the measures which the Government is now going to take, this type of tragedies will not be repeated.

SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV: I hope, the hon. Members will appreciate that working in this mine is very difficult because the entire mine is underground. After the last accident, people have been doing their best even at the risk of their lives to go underground primarily to see that proper precautions and safety measures are taken, wherever necessary to stop future accidents. They had to go underground in certain conditions. Really speaking, many important teams had visited already and had gone underground, including my colleague, the Labour Minister, because the whole mine is underground. Shri Marwah, Shri G. S. Karunakaran and four-five teams of the Directorate General of Mines Safety have also gone underground to take a proper survey, to locate those points where the accident took place, where the

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puncture took place and to take necessary steps—so that in future such accidents could be avoided. Basically, to take precautionary measures to avoid such accidents in future, the Director General of Mines Safety had ordered a proper survey to find out the place where the puncture took place, where the dam has to be erected, what steps have to be taken, how the water should be stopped etc. For that it was necessary to have a proper survey. This survey was mainly to be done from the safety point of view of the workers and the mine. It is not that the workers were working in that area. In this particular area No. 4 incline, it was thought that survey should be done there because the puncture had taken place in that area. They wanted to know the thickness of the wall between the old mine—the abandoned mine—and the working mine so that the same thing does not happen in future. It was, therefore, necessary that this area should be properly surveyed. It was unfortunate that this accident has taken place again, but as I said, for the last three-four months, people have been going underground continuously and taking the risk. Even the dewatering process and rescue operation was done at the risk of certain people because they wanted to help those people. In this area, as I said, the Director-General of Mines Safety has given a specific order that a survey should be done with a view that a proper place should be located and necessary safety measures taken to avoid any future accident.

श्री चन्द्रजित यादव (मोतीहारी) : मंत्री महोदय बतायें कि थिक्नेस कितनी होती चाहिए और कितनी बी ।

SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV: As to how the water came at this place, the hon. Member himself has said that there is a continuous seepage. It is happening in every abandoned mine.

More than a million gallons of water comes by seepage. Therefore, that process is a continuous process. The only thing is that precautions are to be taken so that the water is not able to cause any further damage to the wall and, from that point of view, it was necessary to erect a dam. What should be the thickness of the dam, whether one dam (or) more dams are necessary, what should be the point where the dam should be erected—these things could be done only after the survey.

I would like to assure the hon. Members that after the last accident certain steps were taken. Three top officers, the Chief Executives, the Area Manager and the Manager of the Mines, were asked to go on leave and a new executive has been appointed. All necessary steps of precaution were taken. But sometimes these things do happen unfortunately in spite of all precautions being taken. . .

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: Why was debris allowed to be accumulated there? And before sending the squad why was not dewatering done?

SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV: The hon. Member said that complaints were made earlier by Members that they should not be allowed to go and that debris was being accumulated there. These are matters to be looked into by the Court of Inquiry. That is why we have decided that these matters should be remitted to the Court of Inquiry and all the evidence will come before them. It is difficult for me to say at this stage what complaints were lodged by members. But immediately we have asked the officer-in-charge of that particular area to go on leave and certain other steps are also being taken.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ajit Kumar Saha. I would request you to be brief.

*SHRI AJIT KUMAR SAHA (Vishnupur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, we had a very sad tragedy involving the death of a few hundred workers in the Chasnala mines and it is all the more unfortunate that after four to five months of this tragedy another accident should take place in the same mine leading to the death of five miners. On the 12th of January 1975 after the first accident had taken place the Minister for Mines in his statement made in this House had stated and I quote "After this tragedy it is not that we are shutting our eyes, May be that this tragedy itself has awakened us". He had further stated "One Committee formed by the Energy Minister has already started working. The Committee for the co-ordination of relief under my Chairmanship has started working. I want to assure the House that everything possible has been done and our effort will be to see that this kind of tragedy does not occur in future".

It is very unfortunate Sir, that even after this assurance to this House, a second accident took place and no less than five persons have been killed. In reply to the earlier question the Minister has stated that the Court of Enquiry already constituted in connection with the earlier accident will also go into the causes for the second accident also. However, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, firstly whether all safety measures were taken before the survey team of 8 was sent into the watery mine which resulted into the death of five. Secondly, as you know, Sir, the World Bank has invested crores of rupees in this mine. The original survey map of this mine was prepared by the foreign experts. It has been stated in many quarters that there was some defect in the original map. Such a defect, you will agree Sir, can lead to serious disasters as it had happened in the first accident. Therefore, I

would like to know whether the map of the mine had any defect and what was the thickness of the wall and whether any enquiry in these aspects of the matter has been made and if so, the findings thereof?

SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV: Most of the points I have covered earlier. Now, how the accident took place and whether the map was defective—all these things are matters to be inquired into by the court of inquiry and I think it will not be proper for me to say anything at this stage.

SHRI BIREN DUTTA (Tripura West): In the earlier case, there were permanent labourers whose names were given out. There were casual labourers whose names were not given out. In such a case there is a clear doubt that the court of enquiry is for those persons only whose names were given out and it is not for those who were engaged by the contractors and whose names have not been given out.

In this particular case I would like to know whether there were any other persons along with the seven persons. In the colliery work since risk is involved, generally Scheduled Tribes are engaged. The Scheduled Tribes people are the most wretched people. They are forced to work by the contractors through casual labour practices and in this case negligence can easily take place. I would like to know whether such factors are playing there.

I would like to know from the Minister about the earlier case as also this case and whether casual labour was engaged.

SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV: This time the number of workers of the survey team who went into the mine was eight. We have received all

*The original speech was delivered in Bengali.

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the names who went underground. It will not be correct to say that more persons went. Whether casual or permanent, the total number was eight.

The hon. Member has referred to the earlier case, though it has nothing to do with this Calling Attention. In that case also the total number of people who were victims in that mine was 375. To ascertain the proper number, everything possible was done. Even the names were published in all the newspapers including the local newspapers. Messages were sent to other States, and people were informed. It was checked and not a single person has approached us saying that there was someone else who was trapped in that mine except 375. The number 375 was correct and accurate.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore): Before putting any question, I may request the Minister to add another paragraph before item No. 6 wherein you have expressed and desired—'That the House will join in conveying our grief to the members of the bereaved family.' I will request you to add another para prior to that—

"We express our deep anguish and anger against this worthless management who performed all these things and because of whose negligence this accident took place."

From the reply you will see, he has said there is a continuous seepage and it is a watery mine and in view of the importance of the matter, survey was ordered by the Director General of the Mines of Safety. What was the importance of the matter, I want to know? The enquiry is still going on. You have not yet found out the actual reason of the accident. Just now you have mentioned that the matter is under investigation by the court of enquiry and in the meantime another accident is taking place of the same nature. I will say because the water gushed there was accumulation of the

debris and these unfortunate persons were tired. My question is this. Before sending any other teams inside the mines, underground, will you personally make sure that there is no danger, and not simply rely on some statement by any officer there? What steps are you taking in this direction? If an accident of the same nature takes place after two months more unfortunate lives will be lost. Knowing that the water may come out, still you have sent these teams. So, I want to know whether you will give any guarantee to the House that you will be sure that no accident will take place, at least, of the same nature, in future.

SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV: The main thing, as I said, is to ensure protective measures for the future. We should know the thickness of the wall all along the mine; we should locate the place where the dam had to be erected. Therefore, this survey was necessary. This survey is a basic thing for the safety of the workers. This is intended to take certain action for protective measures for the future. We should know the thickness of the wall, as I said and we should locate the place where the dam should be constructed. Therefore, this survey is a basic thing and this is the first step which has to be taken. But unfortunately this thing has happened. But one thing I would like to say and it is this. No Government can give hundred per cent guarantee that no accident will take place at all. The only guarantee which I can give is that every possible measure will be taken. Already certain measures have been taken to strengthen safety measures in future. Certain accidents in such coal mines all over the world do take place in spite of safety measures. All necessary steps, as I have already said, will be taken.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: Are you re-starting the mine or thinking of abandoning it?

SHRI CHANDRAJIT YADAV: There is no idea of abandoning it.

12.52 hrs.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

NINETY-SECOND REPORT

SHRI R. K. SINHA (Faizabad): Sir, I beg to present the Ninety-second Report of the Estimates Committee on Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in their Seventy-seventh Report on the Ministry of Railways—Railway Electrification Projects

12.52-1/2 hrs.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

TWO HUNDRED AND THIRD REPORT

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE (Calcutta—North-East): I beg to present the Two Hundred and Third Report of the Public Accounts Committee on Action Taken by Government on the recommendations contained in their Hundred and Thirty-fifth Report relating to Chapter I of the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 1971-72, Union Government (Civil)—Revenue Receipts, Volume I, Indirect Taxes.

12.55 hrs.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON OFFICES OF PROFIT

RECOMMENDATION TO RAJYA SABHA TO ELECT A MEMBER

SHRI PATTABHI RAMA RAO (Rajamundry): I beg to move:

"That this House do recommend to Rajya Sabha that Rajya Sabha do elect one member of Rajya Sabha according to the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, to the Joint Committee on

Offices of Profit in the vacancy caused by the retirement of Shri Venigalla Satyanarayana from Rajya Sabha and do communicate to this House the name of the member so elected by Rajya Sabha to the Joint Committee."

MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"That this House do recommend to Rajya Sabha that Rajya Sabha do elect one member of Rajya Sabha according to the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, to the Joint Committee on Offices of Profit in the vacancy caused by the retirement of Shri Venigalla Satyanarayana from Rajya Sabha and do communicate to this House the name of the member so elected by Rajya Sabha to the Joint Committee."

The motion was adopted.

ELECTIONS TO COMMITTEES

(1) ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

SHRI R. K. SINHA (Faizabad): I beg to move:

"That the members of this House do proceed to elect in the manner required by sub-rule (1) of Rule 311 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, thirty members from among themselves to serve as members of the Committee on Estimates for the term beginning on the 1st May, 1976."

MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the members of this House do proceed to elect in the manner required by sub-rule (1) of Rule 311 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, thirty members from among themselves to serve as members of the Committee on Estimates for the term beginning on the 1st May, 1976."

The motion was adopted.