

[Secretary.]

August, 1958, and transmitted to the Rajya Sabha for its recommendations and to state that this House has no recommendations to make to the Lok Sabha in regard to the said Bill".

- (ii) "In accordance with the provisions of rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha I am directed to inform the Lok Sabha that the Rajya Sabha, at its sitting held on the 8th September, 1958, agreed without any amendment to the Sugar Export Promotion Bill, 1958, which was passed by the Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 26th August, 1958."

12-05 hrs.

PETITION RE: LIABILITY OF STATE IN TORT

श्री अर्जुन सिंह भवारिया । श्रीमन्, मैं टार्ट में राज्य के दायित्व के बारे में एक याचिकाकार द्वारा हस्ताक्षर की हुई एक याचिका पेश करता हूँ ।

12-05½ hrs.

STATEMENT RE: EXPLOSION OF AMMUNITION PACKAGES IN PATHANKOT

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence (Shri Fatehsingh-
rao Gaekwad): With your permission, Sir, I would like to make a statement on behalf of Shri V. K. Krishna Menon.

Further to the statements that the Minister of Defence made in this House on the 25th and 27th February, 1958, regarding the explosion at Pathankot, which took place on the 24th February, 1958, I beg to submit that the Court of Inquiry which was instituted to inquire into the explosion has completed its work.....

Mr. Speaker: How long is it?

Shri Fatehsingh-
rao Gaekwad: About two pages.

Mr. Speaker: This is a statement relating to the explosion in Pathankot in February last. It may be laid on the Table. Hon. Members can read it themselves.

(Remainder of the statement laid on the Table)

In accordance with the report submitted by the Court, the number of casualties of Civilians involved in the explosion was 37, of whom 34 died; eleven bodies were recovered and identified and the remaining 23 are missing, presumed to be killed. The number of casualties of Army personnel was 16 of whom 8 died, five bodies were recovered and identified and 2 are missing, believed killed. The damage to the Railway property has been assessed by the Court of Inquiry as Rs. 1,25,300. The loss to the Defence property and stores has not yet been finally assessed, but it is feared that this will be of the order of Rs. 11 lakhs.

The unloading of explosives was being done with due care under the supervision of trained and experienced personnel and there was no evidence of negligence or carelessness on their part. The wagons were received at Pathankot intact and there is no evidence to prove that the explosion was due to any act of sabotage. The civilians who were employed on the unloading work were regular employees of the Ordnance Rail Head group at Pathankot. The explosives in the wagons were inspected prior to their despatch in accordance with the regulations. In view of the fact that most of the essential witnesses died instantly, it was not really possible to say conclusively what was the actual cause of the accident. As all safety

precautions were observed, it is most unlikely that the accident was due to any negligence on anybody's part. However, strict instructions have been issued to all concerned that no efforts should be spared in following the existing regulations with regard to the handling/loading/unloading of ammunition/explosives.

Among the civilians, who were labourers paid from the Defence Services Estimates and who were on *bona fide* duty, 34 were killed and 3 injured, 2 of whom received minor injuries. Immediate interim relief to the extent of Rs. 200 each to the families of those killed and Rs. 100 to one of the injured was paid, as an advance of compensation, pending payment of compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923. In regard to the payment of compensation under the Act, a bill for an amount of Rs. 72,600 has been sent to the audit authorities along with relevant connected documents. It is hoped that this payment will be made shortly.

Deaths of all the military personnel who were involved in the accident have been accepted as attributable to their military service. Family pension claims in respect of them are, however, under verification through the civil authorities concerned in accordance with the normal procedure. To avoid hardship, a Pending Enquiry Award, which is equivalent to family pension, has been sanctioned to the nominated/highest eligible heirs of the deceased. The said award is in issue in seven cases. Eighth case is under dispute as there are two claimants and the matter is being verified through the authorities concerned.

Eight military personnel, who were injured in the accident, have been/are being treated in the military hospital. The Medical authorities are of the opinion that it is likely that one of these individuals may have to be boarded out of service. His claim to disability pension will be decided on the basis of the medical report if he has to be invalided out.

12-05½ hrs.

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TWENTY-NINTH REPORT

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Shri Satya Narayan Sinha): I beg to move:

"That this House agrees with the Twenty-ninth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 10th September, 1958."

Mr. Speaker: Motion moved:

"That this House agrees with the Twenty-ninth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 10th September, 1958."

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat): It is rather delicate for me to raise a point regarding this Report. I was invited to attend the meeting of the Committee, but since we were also attending the debate in the House, none of our Members was present there.

I feel that two important subjects have been clubbed together, that is, the question about the Port of Calcutta and the statement of the Minister of Irrigation and Power regarding the Ganga Barrage Project, and two hours have been allotted. In the light of our experience of the Rehabilitation debate yesterday, the time of two hours is too little. I would suggest that at least the maximum that has been allocated, namely, 2½ hours, should be allotted for that debate.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. I can extend it by half an hour.

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Firozabad): I want to point that the Delhi Rent Control Bill is a controversial Bill and the time of 7 hours allotted is not sufficient. Some more time should be allotted.

Mr. Speaker: If any hon. Member wants this matter to be considered as