

printed stationery which was used for printing ticket of higher denomination and balance money was mis-appropriated by the booking clerks and on Secunderabad station of South-Central Railway, the actual amount of the ticket was accounted as Rs. 2 instead of actual value of the ticket and balance money was misappropriated by operator. This irregularity was detected by checking the records of collected tickets.

The Committee made the following recommendations:

- i) The SPTM should not be Personal Computer (PC) based.
 - ii) Organisations of proven expertise should develop computerised SPTMs for railways.
 - iii) The allotment of SPTMs should be based on limited tenders based on pre-qualifications of vendors.
 - iv) Standard format of Annual Maintenance Contract should form a part of the Tender conditions. The system should have built-in diagnostics to check the components.
 - v) All the data should be stored in battery backed-up Erasable Programmable Memory (EPROM) in Computer so that it can be retrieved at any point of time.
 - vi) Staff of Commercial, Traffic and Accounts Office should be properly trained.
 - vii) Standard Joint Procedure should be issued for accountal and inspection.
- (e) The following action has been taken :
- ** The STEP system installed on Western Railway has been discontinued.
 - ** The recommendations of the committee in para (d) above have been implemented.
 - ** The facility of cancellation of ticket for grant of refund in SPTMs has been restricted to only those counters from which the ticket is issued.
 - ** CBI has filed the charge-sheets for prosecution of 7 railway officials and one person of the company which supplied the machine.
 - ** Major penalty charge-sheets to 17 railway employees and minor penalty charge-sheets to 16 railway employees, have been issued.

DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELLA : I thank the hon. Minister of Railways for giving a detailed answer. I want to know whether the same licence for Keltron com-

pany is continuing in the Central, Northern and South-Central Railways and if so why has it not been cancelled or discontinued because this poor developing country cannot afford to lose crores of rupees in this way ?

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in my opinion, the hon'ble Member had wanted to know about the functioning of the self-printing ticketing machine in Sikanderabad. In its reply I am to state that for the time being it has been shut down and the work is being carried out with old manual system. As far as the question of 'Keltron' is concerned, this company is owned by the State Government of Kerala. This is an Undertaking of the Kerala Government. As far as the question of involving security system is concerned, so that it could not be misused, the company is being advised in this regard.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Dr. Suguna Kumari Chellamella, second supplementary.

DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELLA : No further supplementary.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE : Mr. Speaker, all computers are deliberately being put out of order. At every railway station, tickets are sold in black market. The effort is being made to malign the Railway Ministry. There is a big racket behind it and people are doing illegal business. Is the hon'ble Minister aware of it ? If yes, has he ordered an enquiry into this matter.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the efforts are on to make improvement in the software. As I have stated earlier, we are trying to evolve in built system to prevent beguilement. As far as the question of inquiry is concerned, the CBI has conducted an inquiry in one case and the case has been filed against some people in the court. The departmental proceedings are going on against some other people.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Sukinda Chrome Ore Mines

*322. SHRI NARESH PUGLIA : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Pressure to clear Sukinda lease" as reported in the Statesman dated April 16, 1998;

(b) if so, whether the private sector companies which propose to take over Sukinda chrome-ore mines have been pressing Government to hand over the mines to them; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 mining lease can be granted to an Indian national or a Company as defined in sub-section (1) of Section 3 of Companies Act, 1956 by the concerned State Government. However, for a mineral listed in the First Schedule of the aforesaid Act, prior approval of the Central Government is required before grant of the mining lease by the concerned State Government. In accordance with these provisions, some Companies have been requesting the State Government of Orissa to grant them mining lease for Chrome Ore in Sukinda Valley.

2. The State Govt. of Orissa had sent a proposal dated 24th June, 1997 to the Ministry of Mines seeking approval for the grant of mining lease for chrome ore in Sukinda Valley of Orissa over 50% of the balance area of 855.476 hectares which had become available for grant after the second renewal of the mining lease of M/s Tata Iron and Steel Co. Ltd. (TISCO) for a reduced area, in favour of four parties, i.e. M/s Indian Metal and Ferro Alloys (IMFA)/Indian Charge Chrome Ltd. (ICCL), M/s Ispat Alloys, M/s Ferro Alloys Corporation Limited (FACOR) and M/s Jindal Strips. The proposal was for grant of only 50% of the area of 855.476 ha. whereas the Central Government's Order dated 17th August, 1995 had requested the State Govt. to send the proposal for grant of mining lease in favour of the aforesaid four parties for the total area of 855.476 hectares.

3. While the aforesaid proposal of the State Govt. dated 24th June, 1997 was under examination, Shri M.C. Mahapatra, the then Joint Secretary in this Ministry who was handling the matter, died on 27th September, 1997, allegedly as a result of jumping from the office building of Shastri Bhawan. The police took up the investigations of the circumstances relating to the death of Shri Mahapatra. Initially, the matter was being investigated by the Delhi Police and subsequently by the Crime Branch of the Delhi Police. Later on, the investigations were entrusted to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The entire original records in respect of the proposal for grant of mining lease of Sukinda Chrome Ore mines have been taken over by the CBI and any further action in the matter regarding consideration of the aforesaid proposal for grant of mining lease can be taken up only after return of the original records by the CBI who are still investigating the matter.

4. Subsequently, another proposal dated 30th March, 1998 was received from the State Govt. of Orissa

seeking the views of the Central Govt. on their proposal to undertake mining operations of Chrome Ore over an area of 190.80 hectares (the same area which was earlier recommended by the State Govt. for grant of mining lease in favour of M/s IMFA/ICCL) in Sukinda Valley under section 4(3) of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 (MVR & D Act) and to engage M/s IMFA/ICCL as an agent of the State Govt. to undertake mining operations in the aforesaid area under Rule 75(2) of the Mineral Concession Rules, 1960. Since the proposal of the State Govt. was not found to be consistent with the provisions of the MVR & D Act, particularly Section 4(3) of the Act *ibid*, which allows only the State Govt. to undertake mining and does not recognise mining operations by the State Govt. through an agent. The aforesaid proposal of the State Govt. was returned to them on 23rd April, 1998 conveying Central Government's views to the effect that the proposal is not consistent with the provisions of the MVR & D Act.

5. Subsequently the State Govt. of Orissa vide Notification dated 17.6.98, has notified under Rule 75(1) of Mineral Concession Rules, 1960 that the State Government proposed to undertake mining operations for chrome ore over an area of 119.08 ha. in village Kalipani, District Jajpur in Sukinda Valley. The State Govt. of Orissa vide its order dated 17.6.98 has also granted working permission to M/s ICCL to undertake mining operations of chrome ore over the above mentioned area as an agent of the State Govt. under the provisions of sub-rule (2) of Rule 75 of the Mineral Concession Rules, 1960 for a period of 2 years or approval of lease in their favour by Central Government whichever is earlier.

6. M/s. FACOR has filed a writ petition before the Hon'ble High Court of Orissa, challenging the above mentioned Order of the State Govt. dated 17.6.98 regarding grant of working permission to M/s. ICCL to undertake mining operations as an agent of the State Govt. and thus the matter is subjudice.

Wasteland Development Task Force

*327. SHRIMATI RANI CHITRALEKHA BHONSLE : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have constituted any Wasteland Development Task Force (WDTF) for regeneration of wastelands in the country through afforestation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Department was set up Wasteland Development Task Force (WDTF) on 12.9.1994 with the objective to provide a disciplined force for regeneration of waste-