

*Vote on Account :*

8. While as required, the Annual Financial Statement for the year 1985-86 has been laid before the House and the connected Demands for Grants are also being circulated to the Hon'ble Members along with the other Budget papers I am, at this stage; seeking only a 'Vote on Account' for the first six months of the financial year 1985-86.

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**SUPPLEMENTRY DEMANDS FOR  
GRANTS (PUNJAB), 1984-85)**

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMMERCE AND SUPPLY (SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH): Sir, I beg to present a statement (Hindi and English versions) showing the supplementary Demands for grants in respect of the State of Punjab for 1984-85.

**ELECTION TO COMMITTEE**

[*English*]

**Central Advisory Committee for  
National Cadet Corps**

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO): Sir, I beg to move :

“That in pursuance of Section 12(1) of the National Cadet Corps Act, 1948, 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 Central Advisory Committee for the National Cadet Corps for a term of one year from the date of election, subject to the other provisions of the said Act and the Rules made thereunder.”

MR. SPEAKER : The question is :

“That in pursuance of Section 12(1) of the National Cadet

Corps Act, 1948, the members of this House do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Speaker may direct, two members of the Central Advisory Committee for the National Cadet Corps for a term of one year from the date of election, subject to the other provisions of the said Act and the Rules made thereunder.”

*The motion was adopted.*

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12.07 hrs

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the  
Chair*].

12.08 hrs.

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

[*English*]

**Fire Caused by Inflammable Kerosene  
Supplied in Kerala by Hindustan  
Petroleum Corporation**

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER (Ghazi-pur) : I call the attention of the Minister of Petroleum to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon :

“Fire caused by inflammable Kerosene supplied in Kerala by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation leading to several deaths and injuries to others and the action taken by the Government in the matter.”

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA): Sir, Hon'ble Shri Zainul Basher and other Members have called the attention regarding some accidents in Kerala State last month owing to contaminated kerosene oil.

[Shri Naval Kishore Sharma]

With a sense of deep sorrow and anguish I wish to apprise the House that during February, 1985 some incidents of accidental fire caused by contaminated kerosene oil occurred in Alleppey, Ernakulam, Trichur, Palghat and Malapuram districts of Kerala, resulting in some deaths and burn injuries to some persons. These accidents took place on account of the kerosene oil having become contaminated with Naphtha/Motor Spirit. Supplies of this contaminated kerosene oil came from the Cochin terminal of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation. As on 12th March, 13 persons had died and 109 persons had been injured. The Chairman and Managing Director of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited alongwith the Director (Marketing) of the Corporation visited Trivandrum and met the Chief Minister; the Corporation has contributed Rs. 4.00 lakhs to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund with a view to extending relief to the affected families. Apart from the investigation being made by the DIG, Crime Branch, Kerala State, into the cases registered, an enquiry by a Technical Committee has been ordered. Its report is expected in the last week of March, 1985. In the meantime, the following other steps have been taken in this connection :

- (i) All supplies from the tank suspected to be contaminated have been stopped and the tank has been sealed.
- (ii) Supplies earlier made from this tank have been frozen by the State Government and are being withdrawn from the wholesale and retail points.
- (iii) The State Government has issued instructions to the District Collectors to make exgratia payments to the affected families.

Any further action that appears necessary will be taken after the findings of the Technical Committee become available.

**SHRI ZAINUL BASHER :** Sir, the statement made by the petroleum Minister is far from satisfactory. Firstly, the Hon. Minister has not mentioned as to what action has been taken against the erring officers of the company, who showed utter negligence. When the supplies are loaded in the wagons, I hope there is a procedure to check the quality of the product before the wagon is sealed. I do not know whether the quality was checked in the present case, before the sealing of the wagons. Then, when the wagons reach the destination point, where the supplies are made to the dealers and consumers, there again the product should be checked for the quality. I do not know whether at that point the quality has been checked or not. If only it had been done, this contamination could have been detected. I find that no check has been made, either at the loading or receiving point. Therefore, a gross negligence has been committed and whosoever is responsible for it, should be punished, whether it be at the loading or receiving point.

Secondly, I find that the CID of Kerala is investigating the whole matter. The number of deaths reported upto 13th March is 13, But Yesterday I read somewhere that it is more than 16. It is also reported that an officer of the Hindustan petroleum corporation has been arrested. The statement does not mention this fact. I would like to know whether this is true and, if so, on what count he has been arrested.

Now, I come to my third point which I have raised time and again in the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Petroleum; of which the Hon Minister was also a member then. Whenever any supply of petroleum is made, it is not checked for quality. The result is that diesel, petrol and kerosene are often mixed with lubricating Oil and sometimes even water. The petroleum Dealers Association and other dealers have raised this matter with the Oil Corporations. I do not know what action has been taken on

that representation. I have also raised in the Consultative Committee meeting the same issue. Yet, no precautionary measures have been taken so far. If only the precautionary measures had been taken, this tragedy could have been averted. When water is mixed with petroleum, the motorists and the vehicles are bound to suffer and we do receive reports to that effect time and again.

Coming to compensation, the Hon. Minister has stated that a sum of Rs. 4 lakhs has been deposited by the corporation with the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Is it adequate? We are taking to task Union Carbide and we are demanding full compensation for the tragedy in Bhopal, which was due to their negligence. But, in the present case, we are giving only Rs. 4 lakhs, and that too to the Chief Ministers, Relief Fund, to provide relief to the victims. When about two dozen people have died and many more injured, is this compensation which you have given adequate?

At least the corporation of our country should set an example in giving compensation, before we demand full compensation from the Union Carbide of America. We should also give compensation. Of course, in Bhopal 2,000 people had died and in Kerala only sixteen people have died. It is the responsibility of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation and the Ministry to give full compensation to the victims of this tragedy. I would, therefore, like to know from the Hon. Minister what action he is taking in this regard.

I would once again formulate my questions for him to reply. I would like to know whether there is a procedure to check the quality of the supplies at the loading point as well as at the receiving end, and if there is a procedure, whether the quality of the product i.e. kerosene, had been checked or not. Lastly what compensation is he going to give to the victims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, as the Hon. Member has rightly said, this is very sad that such type of accident has taken place. I and my Ministry are very sorry for what has happened. We would ensure that in future on such type of incidents take place.

Keeping this in view, a committee of the Hindustan Petroleum as well as the IOC has been formed to go into the question of how it took place, and what corrective steps can be taken so that such type of tragedies do not take place in future.

Unfortunately, this incident is the first of its type in the history of the marketing of Oil products in this country.

As to the question of negligence on the part of employees, the matter is being enquired into. A Committee has been set up. It would be known only after the report comes out as to which of the employees is responsible and where the lapse took place. So far as the Corporation is concerned we would see that anybody who is found guilty of negligence is properly dealt with and punished adequately. I can assure the Hon. Member on this account.

With regard to the question of compensation, we have donated Rs. 4/- lakhs to the Chief Ministers Relief Fund, which is being distributed by the district authorities as per the norms of the State Government.

I am told that Rs. 10,000 has been given to the next of kin of those who have died and Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 3,000 has been given to those who have been injured. Of course, I agree with the Hon. Member that this compensation is not sufficient and the HPC would certainly consider any suggestion from the Chief Minister if he desires a higher compensation to be paid.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, words fail me to express adequately our anguish and deep grief at this colossal and ghastly tragedy of the supply of contaminated kerosene.

Sir, the tragedy has affected five districts of Kerala, namely, Alleppey, Ernakulam, Trichur, Palghat and Malappuram, and to an extent Trivandrum. According to the official reports, 13 persons have died and 109 have been injured, but as we all know, these are more official figures.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Eighteen persons have died.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA: You bear with me a little longer. As we all know, these are official reports, as I have been telling you. The deaths, according to the unofficial reports, are far more and it is a tragedy that must be looked into in full details. Look at the nature, the extent and the depth of this tragedy. The kerosene supplied by the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation was all bought from authorised ration shops. Naturally, almost all the persons affected are poor people. They are mostly women and children, poor people who use kerosene in their houses. It is not kerosene that was supplied to them. It appears as if to say that bombs were supplied in the houses of Kerala. Bottles containing this kerosene, and lamps, they all exploded. Look at the depth of the tragedy. In a place in Palghat a woman just lit a match-stick and a kerosene bottle nearby caught fire. The woman got burn injuries and died also. Such is the nature of the kerosene that was supplied. All the victims being poor.

Sir, the only consolation that we may have in this ghastly tragedy that has taken place is that the Government of Kerala, if not all its officials, were at least alive to this serious situation. The Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Shri U.A. Beeran, ordered an inquiry immediately. He ordered

immediate freezing of all the affected stocks. But, Sir, it is a matter of great indignation that not all officials of the Government of Kerala were alive to this ghastly tragedy and took it seriously. We are told, and I quote from *The Week* dated March 17-23 issue:

“Though Minister Beeran ordered seizure of suspected stocks, several days passed before it was done. One District Collector approached by a police officer seeking immediate action was not ready to discuss the matter until the next day.”

Such, therefore, is the callous attitude that we find here and there from certain responsible officers of the Government of Kerala. Sir, we welcome the announcement of the Chief Minister of Kerala that nobody will be spared, and I hope that the investigation that is going on will really spare no one, high or low, and that those officers who were responsible for dereliction of duty despite orders by the Government should also be taken to task.

Sir, I must also say, and I am constrained to say, that I pained at the continued silence of the Centre with respect to this tragedy.

Investigation was ordered in Kerala. Stocks were seized over there. But we find total silence from the Government of India as to what it is to do. I hope the Hon. Minister will be good enough to at least tell us the reasons for this continued silence.

Of course, we welcome his announcement and he has very rightly announced that nobody will be spared and that action will be taken against the employees of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation if they are found guilty as a result of the investigation that has been ordered. It is good on their part to order an investigation by the Technical Committee. But may I ask whether

a mere enquiry by the Technical Committee of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation itself which is involved in the tragedy would suffice? The Hindustan Petroleum Corporation is involved in the tragedy. And it is the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation which is instituting a departmental enquiry to find out whether its employees are responsible. This is an unsatisfactory situation. Though I welcome the immediate institution of enquiry by the Technical Committee, I must also express my dissatisfaction with the nature of such an enquiry and therefore I must urge upon the Government, upon the Hon. Minister that an independent enquiry should be held so that it must also have the credibility that it deserves and the wide respect that it should have.

It is the poor who are involved, mostly women and children who are involved in the tragedy. I must say that the Government may even come forward with the CBI enquiry into the whole situation. Why is this negligence?

These tragedies are man-made tragedies. It has been established that Naphtha got into kerosene supply. Samples were taken and investigation was done. As you have, Mr. Minister, rightly pointed out in your statement at some stage which stage is the matter of enquiry—Naphtha got into the kerosene supply. But at what stage? Was it at the transportation stage in the snips? Was it at the oil terminal stage at Cochin jetty? Was it at the stage when the kerosene was pumped into the pipeline which was used earlier for Naphtha? Was it in the tanker or the lorries carrying the kerosene supply?

Sir, the first incident took place perhaps somewhere around February, 26, subject to correction. It is now the 19th day of March and we are still awaiting the report and still awaiting action. By now, it ought to have been cleared and we ought to have moved rather expeditiously. Sir, are we to understand that there are no checks, no safety measures involved in the transportation of such an article as kerosene? The question has been

asked but not answered. What are those checks? What are those safety measures? Pipeline is not being cleaned; oil tankers, lorries are not being cleaned. Are we to understand that there are no safety measures at all, whatsoever? If there are any safety measures, will the Hon. Minister enlighten the House as to what those safety measures are and who are responsible for the implementation of those safety measures?

We are told that some cases have been instituted by the Government of Kerala. I am obliged to the Government for having moved and instituted some cases.

May I ask against whom these cases have been instituted? Who are those people? I am afraid the cases may be instituted against some petty people here and there. But as has been assured by both the Government of Kerala and our Government here and, rightly so, action has to be taken against any person responsible, high or low. Has any case been instituted against any officer of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation?

Who is responsible for the supply of tanker lorries? I do not know, but perhaps it is not the responsibility of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, that supplies kerosene to supply tanker lorries also. Perhaps, it is in the hands of wholesalers. Has any case been registered against such big wholesalers, responsible for the supply of tanker lorries? Let the Government enlighten this House with respect to the cases that have been instituted and against whom. Has any case been instituted against any of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation officials?

The Government has assured us right now—I must thank the Hon. Minister for that—and the Government has expressed its readiness that if the Chief Minister of Kerala asks for more financial assistance, more financial assistance will be given. Thanks for the assurance. But why wait for the Government of Kerala to ask for more

[SHRI G.M. Banatwala]

assistance? It is our responsibility. Let us move in the matter in a manner that be fits us.

An amount of Rs 4 lakhs has been given by the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and the Chief Minister of Kerala has announced—we welcome that announcement payment of Rs 10,000 to the families of victims and Rs. 1000 to Rs. 3000 to those injured.

I need hardly point out the light manner in which the lives of the poor people are being treated in our country. What is the compensation that is paid in the case of railway accident? What is the compensation that is paid in the case of air accident? It is more than Rs. 1 lakh. But the lives of these poor people who bought kerosene from ration shops, mostly women and children, are weighed at Rs. 10,000 and for injury at Rs 1000. to Rs 3000. It is highly insufficient. Let the Hon. Minister stand here, in this august House, and not pass the buck to the Chief Minister of Kerala to declare here and now that full compensation will be paid to every victim of this man-made ghastly tragedy of contaminated kerosene or the bombs that were supplied to every house in Kerala.

Therefore, I formulate my questions. As I have said, the departmental inquiry instituted by the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation with respect to the negligence of its own employees is of a highly unsatisfactory nature. There must be some independent inquiry. Will the Government therefore move into the matter and have even a CBI inquiry? I have also asked for the details with respect to the cases that have been instituted and against whom. I have also asked for an immediate announcement by the Hon. Minister for the payment of full compensation for this man-made tragedy. I have also sought the information from the Government as to what safety measures are there with respect to the transportation of such articles.

What happened to those safety measures? If there are nil, what is being done about them? I hope the hon. Minister will enlighten the House on all these important points.

As I said in the whole of this tragedy, the only consolation, of course, is the expeditious action that has been taken by the Government of Kerala though some of these officers have failed to realise the seriousness of the situation and to rise to the situation and are responsible even for dereliction of their duties.

My congratulations to the Chief Minister of Kerala and to the Minister for Food and Civil Supplies for the immediate action announced by them though how those announcements were carried out, need also to be looked into.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA: It is really sad, I repeat again, that this tragedy has taken place and, as has been rightly pointed out by my learned friend, it is the poorer sections of the society which use the oil and, therefore, they have been hit by this tragedy. I am one with him in expressing my grief. This unfortunate accident did happen and happened for the first time, as I said earlier.

Therefore, an Enquiry Committee has been instituted to go into the causes. My learned friend doubted the setting up of the Committee by the HPC. I say not only the HPC's Committee but Indian Oil Corporation people have also been associated with it. Therefore, I hope this Committee which has been set up at the highest level would arrive at some conclusions, find out the lacunae, suggest remedial measures and will also fix responsibilities of those who have failed.

However, a suggestion has been made by him about setting up of an independent inquiry in this matter. I can assure the Hon. Member that when

this Committee's findings come, they would be examined at the highest level and, if need be, an independent inquiry would also be made into this matter.

I would not forget it. It is an assurance which is being given on the floor of the House which has always to be implemented. Otherwise, we are liable for breach of privilege, as you are aware.

So far as the question of cases being registered is concerned, cases have been registered by the Crime Branch of the Kerala Government and, as I understand, out of the 20 persons who have been arrested, most of them are the employees of the HPC and, therefore, there is no question of leaving anybody, howsoever small or big he or she may be.

With regard to the payment of compensation, I had earlier stated that we have, in the initial stages, donated Rs. 4 lakhs to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and we are prepared to pay more but it is the State Government which has fixed certain norms for payment of compensation in case of such type of accidents. And I would be too willing to share the burden if the Chief Minister or the State Government so desire. The HPC would not shirk its responsibility.

**SHRI K. P. UNNIKRISHNAN :**  
What about MPs? Why only Chief Ministers?

**SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA :** The State Government has certain responsibility in the distribution of relief in such cases.

**SHRI K. P. UNNIRISHNAN :**  
Your Ministry can do on their own.

**SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA :** We are prepared. I have said, and I repeat, that we are prepared to do whatever is possible. The norms are there. If the Chief Minister so desires, we would be prepared.

**SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA :**  
You get in touch with him immediately so that there is no delay.

**SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA :** We are in touch with the Chief Minister. My officers, the chairman and managing Director and the Director marketing went to Kerala, met the Chief Minister and offered the help. And we would still be willing to do it. There is no question of not sharing the responsibility. We know the magnitude of the tragedy and we would be too willing to help those who have been injured and the families of those who died.

**SHRI DHARAM PAL SINGH (Sonepat) :** Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in this Kerala tragedy, according to official information, about 13 persons have been killed and about 113 are having serious injuries on their person. The State Government has also announced some relief to the families of the affected persons. But this is not sufficient. The compensation should be enhanced, and the Government should pressurise the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation to contribute more money, so that it could be paid as compensation to the affected families.

In fact, many chemical agents are used for preparing kerosene oil, and impurities in any one of them can affect the quality of the kerosene oil. Now the question arises how and at what stage the impure substance came to be added to the said kerosene oil, so that it can be ascertained how much quantity of kerosene oil is adulterated. Secondly, I want to know whether the sample of the killer kerosene has been got examined chemically from the forensic laboratory of the Government and from the laboratory of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation and if so, the details of the said reports with dates should be supplied by the Hon. Minister, so that at the earliest stage the specific chemicals which made the killer kerosene oil so highly inflammable, almost explosive, can be detected and appropriate action taken.

[Shri Dharam Pal Singh]

I would also like to point out that the statement does not mention the date of appointment of the Technical Committee. The Technical Committee itself should have been appointed at the earliest stage so that the sample could have been taken at the earliest stage and the results of the chemical examiner could have been received for the purpose of ascertaining the real facts. In this respect I want to know from the Hon. Minister whether the reports of the chemical examination from the laboratory of the Corporation as well as from the government laboratory could also be given of this stage.

**SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA** : With regard to the appointment of the Technical Committee, my learned friend has asked for the date. The Technical Committee was appointed on 12-3-1985.

Regarding the question as to what chemicals were used and whether there has been some sort of a check, I may tell him that this kerosene was an imported one and, therefore, the question of using chemicals here does not arise; I would like to tell my learned friend that this kerosene was imported from foreign countries.

With regard to the compensation part, I would be guilty of repeating what we are prepared to consider payment of a higher amount of compensation if it is so thought fit by the State Government.

**SHRI SURESH KURUP** (Kottayam) : The magnitude of the tragedy has already been described in this House by other Hon. Members and I am not going into any description of the tragedy. What I would like to say is that the statement made by the Minister is wrong. The total number of persons who died due to this tragedy is not 13 but it is 18 and the number of persons injured is not 109; it comes to around 150.

The most important thing in this statement is that it is mentioned as if

this tragedy took place suddenly. It is not the case. This tragedy took place in a span of one month. The first incident was reported on February, 11 and till last week these deaths have continued and both the Union Government, the State Government and the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation were callously watching people die. Does the Government think that the value of the poor people's lives in Kerala is that cheap? Sanctioning only Rs. 4 lakhs is only adding insult to injury. I want to know why this little amount of money is being distributed. Is it so because these people are not travelling by air? All these are poor people who use kerosene in their houses. They live in houses which do not have electricity and the deaths took place in the households of poor people. I urge upon the Government to increase the compensation to Rs. 1 lakh to each person. That is one of the most important things that the Government should do.

Regarding the safety measures, in the Ernakulam jetty even a child in Kerala knows that the callous attitude of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation brought about this tragedy. From Ernakulam jetty to the storage tank of HPC one pipeline is so far used for pumping Naphtha and kerosene and the arrangement is to use sea water to wash these pipelines using a pump and I allege that the capacity of the pump is very low. Its capacity should have been 300 tonnes per hour. 300 tonnes per hour sea water should have been pumped and washed. I would like the Minister to clarify what is the capacity of the pump used in Ernakulam jetty to wash these pipelines. But this aspect apart, if only the HPC authorities had taken sufficient care to test the products vigorously in their storage tank, this accident could have been averted. There are no proper testing facilities. At present they are only testing the colour and density of kerosene in their storage tank. The Minister should reply. Why the important test of checking flash points is neglected in the storage tanks? What is the nature of this technical committee? Who are the persons appointed on

this technical committee? What is the date of appointment of this technical committee?

SHRI K. P. UNNIKRISHNAN : They say it is 12th March.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : That means on February 11 this incident took place and for a span of one month the government was callously watching. I ask the government to institute a high-level Central agency inquiry into the whole incident apart from the technical committee inquiry.

Sir, in the statement it is mentioned that all supplies from the tank suspected to be contaminated have been stopped and tank sealed. In this span of one month—the date when the accident took place and the supplies stopped—I allege that this kerosene is even now being distributed in Kerala. It is not stopped. It is stored in ration shops and the poor people are buying from the ration shops this very stock. What machinery has government instituted to seize the stores? The Minister should specifically say what machinery is there and when this order issued to stop the supply of this kerosene through the ration shops?

Lastly, when did the State Government inform the Union Government about this tragedy? I want the specific date.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : Sir, my friend Mr. Kurup has put many questions with regard to this tragedy and he has informed me that the tragedy started on 11th February. We have no information as to when it started. It was only when the reports from the Press came that we came to know and that was probably on 25th or 26th February.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : Report started appearing right from 11th February.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : I have no idea. I have been told the reports in the Kerala Press first appeared on 25th or 26th February and immediately after receiving the report the SPC officials went to Kerala. They met the Chief Minister. The Food Minister immediately ordered that the stocks should be frozen. We also sealed our terminal tank from where the oil was being supplied to the various points. So, all possible steps were taken by the HPS and also by the Food and Civil Supplies Department of Kerala that all stocks be frozen. It appears that whatever must have been passed on to the consumer might not have been returned. In fact, the Food Minister appeared on the television.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : Poor people in Kerala do not see T. V.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : Therefore, whatever publicity was possible was there. So, whatever possible steps could be taken were taken at the earliest so far as the State government is concerned.

To the best of my knowledge that is what has been done by the State Government.

So far as the Committee's membership is concerned, my learned friend wanted the information, I will give this information. The names are :

Shri T. C. Verghese, Deputy General Manager, Technical Services, Vizag Refinery.

Shri T. F. Noronha, Chief Project Manager, Cochin.

Shri C. V. Ramaswami, Chief Chemist, Bombay Refinery.

Shri R. Veeraraghavan, Manager, Safety, Bombay Refinery.

Then, subsequently, based on the discussion between HPCL and IOC, two representatives of IOC have been

[Shri Naval Kishore Sharma]

included in the Technical Committee. The representatives of IOC are the following :

Shri George John, Chief Quality Control Manager, IOC, Bombay.

Shri F. G. Panikulam, Senior Shipping Manager, IOC, Bombay.

So, they are also being added. This is the constitution of committee.

AN HON. MEMBER : There should be a Judicial enquiry.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Let him finish.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : I hope this Committee, which is a highpower committee, will go into all these questions. My learned friend was talking about the Cochin terminal and the pipelines and so on. I hope this Committee will go into all these questions.

With regard to compensation, I have already said, we will try to do whatever is possible, if the State Government so desires.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : The Minister has not answered two important questions I put. One question was, what is the capacity of the pump used in Ernakulam Jetty to clean this pipeline. That is number one, Number two is this. The Minister should clarify why the important task of checking the flash point in storage tank was neglected by them.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : All these have to be gone into by the Committee, whether this aspect was neglected or not, whether this thing was not properly done etc. This would be gone into by the Committee. I am sorry I will not be able to answer the question at this stage. This is going to be enquired into.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : My question was, what is the capacity of the pump used for this flushing, why this important test was not done in the storage tank ? Sir, no report or enquiry is needed.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : He wants to find out whether it is correct or not. That is what he said.

SHRI K. P. UNNIKRIISHNAN : He is asking for information, not whether it is correct or not.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : I have no information regarding the capacity of flushing pump readily available. I will supply it.

SHRI K. P. UNNIKRIISHNAN : Will you provide it to the House ?

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : Sure.

SHRI SURESH KURUP : On more thing. When did the State Government inform the Union Government about this incident ? That is important.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Mr. Unnikrishnan. You carry on.

SHRI K. P. UNNIKRIISHNAN : Sir, I have been listening very carefully to the various answers that my friend the Hon. Minister for Petroleum was giving in response to this Calling Attention Motion. I have also gone through his statement. I do not know what conclusion you have reached, Sir. To my mind one basic question has arisen. Is there a responsible and responsive Government in this country or not ? If there is one, is this Ministry responsive to the public mood or not ? Do they know what is going on in this country ? I hope he will bear me out. We have been such close and good friends for decades. I hold nothing against him. I have always held him in great esteem and greatest affection. But, Sir, I am

really shocked that he did not come *suo motu* with a statement. Sir, today is the 19th of March.

For the last five weeks, the Kerala press, the National press has been giving reports about certain events that have taken place and they have been characterised here that some deaths occurred somewhere. Sir, whether it is one death or a hundred deaths, it is diminishing of humanity. It should have shocked. If this Ministry or the Corporation had the slightest social awareness they would have been shaken out of torpor and here the Hon. Minister says that some deaths occurred and some injured. Is it that they are to be treated like flies? The question has been agitating for the last five weeks and there was no mention about this in the House. I was hoping that we would not have to give a motion on the very first day when the House met and he would come out with a statement. I want to know what exactly is the relationship of the public sector undertaking. Of course, it has a degree of autonomy But it has no licence to kill people. As Mr. Kurup and Mr. Banatwalla asked : what have they been doing all these days? Have they frozen their will to act in a situation like this and that too when all the people in the whole world were shaken over the dimension of the tragedy in Bhopal? 18 deaths have taken place and hundreds of people are still lying in the hospital all over the State. It is as if only a small portion has been affected. The Minister has not explained the position because they are still waiting for the day when the technical committee will assess. People involved in such quality control are able to test samples and give a preliminary opinion. Did he have any preliminary opinion? Sir, there has been criminal negligence by this HPC and they continue this criminal negligence. Since last month this Killer Kerosene has been chasing the people. Women and Children have not been sleeping in their homes. People have been killed, innocent people belonging to the poorest strata, weakest sections have

been affected. Their houses have been burnt and here he comes and tell us like this, when the tragedy has struck and it continues to leave a trail of deaths, attacks innocent people and some people are spending sleepless nights in hundreds of villages in Kerala.

Sir, you know that they are depending on kerosene for fuel as well as lighting. I do not know whether this complacency has any meaning. I am sorry to say this. There is also a limit to such governmental complacency. Therefore, Sir, I want to know when exactly was the Ministry informed of this, at what date and time the Ministry was apprised of this by HPC. What action did the Ministry take? Did the Ministry advise the HPC to take action and did they at all have any explanation? Did the HPC give any explanation of any kind as to how it had happened because it has been a grave dereliction of duty and standards of quality control have not been followed? There are certain international standards, national standards, certain ISI standards, certain norms and standards fixed by the Corporation itself and all these standards of quality control have been violated.

Not only quality control, maintenance standards have also been violated. We do not know that; we have yet to know as the Committee has yet to go into this question. What are the terms of reference of this technical Committee? Can they fix criminal culpability of X, Y or Z? They will give a report on what actually occurred at a particular time. What actually are their terms of reference? Was there anything wrong in the imported crude oil? Then it follows that if there was, the quality of imported crude had not been tested at the port of entry. Is it that there are serious lacunae in the maintenance standards of the pipelines? Or is it in the tankers? What are the standards fixed for tankers? In respect of all these details, the House must be taken into

[Shri K. P. Unnikrishnan]

confidence. What are the terms of reference of this Committee and what is the constitution? As was said by my friend, Shri Banatwalla, HPC cannot be allowed to whitewash its own acts of omission and commission. They cannot be allowed to run away in a situation where dozens of people belonging to the poorest strata have died and hundreds are still lying in the hospital. You can imagine the condition of those whose bread winners have died. The Minister seems to be satisfied by saying that he has given four lakhs. Mr. Minister, you are not giving that out of charity. We passed an amendment last year to the Motor Vehicles Act increasing the compensation to Rs. 50000 or so, and in rail accidents, the compensation is more than a lakh. Is the amount of four lakhs of rupees adequate for eighteen people who have been killed, and hundreds of people seriously injured and lying in the hospitals, and the houses burnt and so on? Does he consider it to be an adequate compensation? Why does he have to wait for the Chief Minister or anybody to tell him, or leave it to us to say that? What are they waiting for? If Union Carbide is responsible for the Bhopal tragedy, is HPC not responsible for this tragedy in Kerala? Can they run away like that? When we are passing a legislation to protect the interests of those innocent citizens and when we are arresting those who are responsible for the Bhopal tragedy, why is the Ministry sleeping in this case? This is a shocking revelation. He says that he constituted a Committee on 12th March, 1985. Why this delay? The crucial question remains when was this Ministry informed of this? I want to know, whether the earlier request of Kerala Government for higher compensation has not been agreed to by HPC. Probably the Marketing Director or whoever he is has taken this decision. Is it a decision to be taken at the level of Marketing Director? I want to know that. Will he entrust this whole case to CBI? This is because CBI alone

can go into certain aspects. The Technical Committee can give you a report on aspects of maintenance and quality control, but on culpability, dimensions of the crime etc., only CBI can find out so that a proper case can be instituted. Is he prepared? What is holding him back? About compensation, will he agree and tell the House that he is prepared to pay a higher compensation of Rs. one lakh per victim, per death and Rs. fifty thousand each for those who have suffered, burns and injuries?

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : Sir, my dear friend Shri Unnikrishnan has rightly observed that death, whether it be of one or more persons, is shocking. I do agree and this is really a tragedy wherein, I feel, too many deaths have been there and too many injuries have been there and this is really a matter of grief and anguish to me and to all of us.

Whatever happened has happened and as I said earlier, the only thing we can do is to see that in future such accidents do not occur and secondly, those who are responsible for acts of omission or commission, should not be spared. With that end in view, firstly a Technical Committee has been formed to go into the question and as has been rightly pointed out by my learned friend, this Technical Committee would go into the technical aspects of the question, that is, maintenance and all that. After its report comes, as I had earlier indicated in reply to the question of Shri Banatwalla, if need be an independent inquiry would be set up to find out and to fix the responsibility of the HPC officials. I can assure this House, through you Sir, that nobody would be spared. With regard to the criminal liability or culpable liability, this matter is already under inquiry by the State Government and the State Government, I hope, would be able to find out the involvement or culpability of the persons who are responsible for this tragedy. Since this matter is under inquiry, pending investigation,

it would not be proper for me to say anything on this count.

With regard to the quantum of damages or compensation, I am one with the Hon. Members of this House that this compensation amount is too meagre and whatever is possible, would be done to the satisfaction of the people who have been injured in this accident. But this matter has to be decided, as I said earlier, in consultation with the State Government and every step would be taken to give relief to the victims. This is what I can assure you.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The House will now adjourn for lunch and meet again at 14.15 hours.

13.13 hrs

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till fifteen minutes past Fourteen of the clock.*

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*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Seventeen minutes past Fourteen of the clocks.*

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

- (1) Drought conditions in Rajasthan and need for Central assistance for drought relief works

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN (Barmer) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am giving the following statement before the House under rule 377 :

Thousands of villages in Rajasthan are facing famine. The famine has assumed alarming proportion in Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Nagaur districts of the western Rajasthan.

The State Government has not started any famine relief work. Some labourer have earned wages under the National Rural Employment and National Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme but this is insufficient.

The Rajasthan Government has submitted a report to the Central Government apprising them of the famine conditions and sought assistance of Rs. 140 crores. The Central Government had sent a study group two months ago which submitted its report to the Central Government but the Central Government has not given any money except an advance of Rs. 10 crores.

The desert districts of Barmer, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer are facing drinking water crisis. Water tankers are sent ther. but this is not sufficient. There is need to make arrangement for drinking water through army so that it is made available to the affected villages on war-footing.

There is need to start famine relief works. Thousands of farmers have gone and are still going to Gujarat, Haryana and towards Rajasthan canal because famine relief works have not been started.

The cattle owners of desert districts have gone to Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and other States. The fodder has become costly and there is need to sell it at subsidised rates.

The Central Government is earnestly requested to provide immediate assistance of Rs. 140 crores to the Rajasthan Government so that famine relief work is started on