

With these words I thank you for giving me time to speak on the Supplementary Demands for Grants.

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STATEMENT RE : INDUSTRIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION- RIGOROUS ENFORCEMENT OF CONTROL MEASURES.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI) : Exactly a year ago, Bhopal was overtaken by a ghastly tragedy involving heavy loss to human life and property. The unprecedented environmental disaster on December 3, 1984 resulted from a combination of shortcomings in concepts and designs of the plant and in the practices and safety measures adopted in its operation. The haunting memories of death, misery and suffering will endure for ever. We have tried our best and spared no effort in organising relief and rehabilitation measures on a massive scale for the victims of the tragedy. But the traumatic effects of the holocaust will continue to be felt; no relief or rehabilitation can ever compensate the brutal sufferings of countless men, women and children caused by gross neglect of fundamental safety. Hon'ble Members are aware of the Government's ceaseless efforts for securing justice to the affected population.

The Bhopal Tragedy provided painful proof that no substitute exists for strict and ceaseless vigilance of industrial safety measures coupled with a high degree of awareness of the risks and consequences and a scientific analysis of these. No laxity in such matters can ever be permitted. While educational and promotional efforts have their own place, what is essential is a strict enforcement of well-thought-out safety regulations and deterrent penalty to those who fail to provide the necessary safeguards and play with the lives of people. This is all the more so where one has to deal with agencies who do not take adequately seriously their responsibilities to the community at large.

A thorough review of the existing provisions of the Factory Act has been undertaken, realising the need for protecting the workers from the health hazards arising out of storage, use and production of hazardous materials. The Factories Act will be amended to specify the special requirements regarding safety and health which the owners and occupiers of factories have to follow. The Act would also lay down the permissible limits of exposure to toxic and chemical substances. Penalties for violation of the Act would be made deterrent.

We intend to make provisions for the management of hazardous substances beyond those that can be covered by the Factories Act. The Acts for Water and Air Pollution control will also be amended to ensure that we have adequate powers for dealing effectively with violators of safety. Provisions for enforcing closure of polluting industries which do not observe standards will be introduced. The present penalties for defaulters are inadequate and will be made deterrent. Government would consider enabling private individuals affected by industrial polluting factories.

It shall be our endeavour to see that tragedies like the one in Bhopal do not recur and that every effort is made to strive towards promoting industrial safety and a cleaner environment.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura): Sir, a committee was constituted just after that incident. It also submitted its report. But we do not know what is there in the report and what happened to that report.

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BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Fifteenth Report

[English]

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND TOURISM (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT) : Sir, I beg to present the Fifteenth report of the Business Advisory Committee.

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