

[Shri V. Dhananjaya Kumar]

of supervising the auction thereby eliminating the traditional role played by middlemen and traders. In this way, the fear that the grower will be exploited will also be minimized.

The Coffee Board can definitely play a vital role in getting a reasonable price to the grower. At the same time, we can earn more foreign exchange by finding a good market for our coffee in the international field.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: There is no distinction between tea curing and coffee curing.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR: Coffee has to undergo curing process whereas in the case of tea you just pick the tea leaves, blend and sell them. Tea curing process is not that cumbersome. Coffee curing and coffee blending is a big process but preparing liquid coffee is yet another big process. This is an art. Many of our North Indian friends like to drink coffee but they do not know how to prepare good coffee. I was just trying to put before you the difficulties faced by the coffee growers.

I would plead with the hon. Minister that because of the peculiar situation in which the Coffee Board is placed, it is very difficult to operate the dual marketing system. The Coffee Board is hard pressed to get the coffee pooled, which is its bounden duty under the Coffee Act as it exists today. But, at the same time it would be very difficult for the Coffee Board to enforce these provisions because it has no enforcement machinery. It cannot go in search of each and every grower. The Coffee Board has got power under the existing law to seize coffee or to withhold permission for exporting the coffee. They can go to the dealer or to

any other trader, make search and seize coffee. But, all this would ultimately amount to harrassment of the growers.

The only alternative is to remove this 50 per cent barrier and make everything free. Let the growers get a reasonable price. At the same time the Coffee Board can also remain vibrant by doing this kind of service to the coffee industry. This would encourage the coffee growers to grow more coffee which will in turn means more foreign exchange for our country.

So, I would earnestly request the Minister to kindly accept the amendment proposed by me. This is a very small amendment which proposes to remove this 50 per cent barrier so that the coffee grower will get more freedom and this will also help our country to earn more foreign exchange.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER—Contd.

Deaths in Rajashtan due to use of suspected contaminated Kerosene

17.00 hrs

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATRUAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA): With great sorrow, I wish to inform the House of the unfortunate incident in certain parts of Rajasthan in which 27 persons so far have lost their lives and a number of persons injured, as a result of the use of contaminated kerosene.

An intimation was received from the State Government of Rajasthan telephonically in the evening of 9th March, 1994, informing about some deaths in Jhalawar and Baran districts of Rajasthan on account of accidents occurring due to the

use of kerosene by persons in their houses, etc. Senior Officers of the IOC from Northern Region Head Office Delhi and an Officer of Oil Industry Safety Directorate were directed to proceed to Rajasthan immediately and investigate into the matter in association with the State Government officials and also take action for withdrawal of suspected contaminated SKO for preventing any similar accidents. Executive Director, Northern Region of IOC and officers from Head Office, IOC, Bombay also reached Kota and carried out investigations. IOC constituted an Internal Committee headed by General Manager (Markg. Operations), Northern Region to conduct the enquiry and find out the cause of accidents and the contamination of SKO, etc. As later, reports of more deaths came in, it was considered necessary to appoint a high level Enquiry Committee. Accordingly, an Enquiry Committee has been constituted by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, consisting of the following officers:—

- i. Executive Director,
Oil Industry Safety
Directorate : Chairman
- ii. A representative of
Chief Controller of
Explosives : Member
- iii. Shri S.K. Khosla,
GM(O&M), IBP Co.
Bombay. : Member
- iv. Shri R.K. Mulla,
GM (Ops.), HO, HPCL,
Bombay. : Member
- v. A representative of
State Government of
Rajasthan. : Member

The terms of reference of enquiry by the Enquiry Committee will be as follows:—

- (i) To establish the cause(s) of deaths and other injuries due to the accidents on account of use of kerosene.
- (ii) To determine the nature and causes of accidents.
- (iii) Source of supply of SKO causing accidents and its mode of transportation, distribution and sale to the consumers.
- (iv) Whether the IOC and BPC officials followed the instructions on quality control and safety precautions and other procedures prescribed in the operations Manual, particularly, in view of the instructions issued after accidents in Cochin.
- (v) To determine responsibility of persons on account of whose negligence the accidents occurred.
- (vi) To suggest measures to prevent such accidents and happenings in future.
- (vii) Any other relevant matters.

According to the information collected from the State Government, 27 persons are reported to have died on account of the accidents by use of contaminated SKO. 225 persons got burn injuries out of which 85 are still in hospitals. The districts affected are Jhalawar, Baran, Kota, Bundi and Chittorgarh.

The State Police of Rajasthan have registered criminal cases against the officials of the IOC operating the Kota Depot of IOC, from where the SKO was issued. The three officers of IOC including

[Capt. Satish Kumar Sharma]

the Senior Depot Manager and one Khalasi, managing the operations at IOC, Kota Depot, have been arrested. According to the Police, the officials have admitted their failure and responsibility for issuing contaminated SKO from the Depot.

Joint Secretary, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, was also deputed to Rajasthan to ensure retrieval of contaminated SKO and restoration of distribution of *cr-spec SKO* in consultation with senior officials of State Government. As far as could be ascertained, it appears that there was some mix-up of petrol in kerosene in the operation of decanting of SKO and petrol from the railway tank wagons in the SKO and petrol tanks at Kota Depot of IOC. Reports of the deaths during handling of kerosene at a retail dealer's premises were received on 18th February, 1994. The incident was however not pursued to its logical end treating this as an accident. It appears that after initial mistake and reports of deaths, IOC officials at Kota Depot tried to cover up the mistake in the decanting operation, in the depot between 15th February and 18th February, 1994 and did not take necessary action to isolate the product and not to issue it. Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas willfully cooperate in the investigation of the cases by the State Police and also take stringent action against the guilty officials found responsible for negligence and non observance of prescribed safety precautions, etc.

In consultation with and with the assistance of State Government machinery, the contaminated SKO is being withdrawn from the retailers and wholesalers by the IOC and being stored separately for further investigation etc. So far, a total of 190 KLs of contaminated

SKO has been retrieved. Fresh stocks of SKO are available at Kota Depot and will be issued to the wholesalers at the instructions of the State Government officials. It is learnt that some *ex-gratia* payment has been made by the State Government to the next of kin of the deceased persons. I have directed IOC, irrespective of their responsibility to pay Rs. 1 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and other appropriate amounts for the injured in consultation with the State Government. Further steps are being taken by the oil companies to prevent such happenings and accidents by ensuring strict compliance of laid down instructions on quality control and safety regulations and checks.

As the Parliament was closed from 10th to 14th March, 1994, the House could not be informed earlier. *(Interruptions)*

17.05 hrs.

RE: STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF
STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF
PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ON
DEATH IN RAJASTHAN DUE TO USE
OF SUSPECTED CONTAMINATED
KEROSENE

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Oscar Fernandes was on his legs. Please understand the rules. There are prohibitions now. You cannot seek any clarifications now. You can do it later on. I am sorry. I will not allow.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are governed by certain rules.

(Interruptions)