

offered both financial and technical assistance for the implementation of the Alumina Plant to be set up in Gujarat. The extent to which Hungarian assistance is necessary and can be utilised in this regard is under consideration of the Government.

**Consultation with Youth Organisations by
Expert Committee on Unemployment**

4251. SHRI C. JANARDHANAN : Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Expert Committee on Unemployment has also contacted various youth organisations in the country, and

(b) if not, whether steps will be taken in the matter ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI R. K. KHADII KAR) : (a) Yes.

(b) Does not arise.

**International Seminar on Imperialism,
Independence and Social Transformation
in the Contemporary World**

4252. SHRI D. K. PANDA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased state :

(a) whether an International Seminar on Imperialism, Independence and Social Transformation in the contemporary world was held in New Delhi in the last week of March, 1972;

(b) if so, the nature of discussion held at the Seminar ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The list of Themes for discussion in the Seminar is placed on the Table of the House. [Place in Library. See No. LT-1871/72]

12 02 hrs.

RE. CALLING ATTENTION NOTICE

Query

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore) : I gave a call attention notice regarding the killing of ten workers at Ambarnath.

MR. SPEAKER : Please do not get up any time. Please resume your seat now.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : They were shot by the police. The Minister says that he is eager for industrial peace...

MR. SPEAKER : Why do you not listen to me ? Just consider that I too have something to tell you and do not express your ideas as to what I am going to tell you

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : Ten workers have been killed. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : I will tell you. The procedure we follow is this. After the question hour we allow the call attention motion and then come the papers laid on the table. It is only after that that such matters could come up. Do you realise your mistake now ?

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : Yes, Sir; I am sorry for that.

SHRI KARTIK ORAON (Lohardaga) : Sir, I have to...

MR. SPEAKER : Here is another person; he has not understood anything. Did he ever try to follow what I was telling the other hon. Member just now ?

12:04 hrs.

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

**REPORTED LEAKAGE OF COAL TAR FUMES
FROM ROURKELA STEEL PLANT**

SHRI ARJUN SETHI (Bhadrak) : I call the attention of the Minister of Steel

[Shri Arjun Sethi]

and Mines to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon :

'The reported leakage of coaltar fumes from the Rourkela Steel Plant causing suffocation and vomiting to the citizens of old Rourkela town.'

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM): Sir, I understand that the Sulphuric Acid Unit of the Rourkela Steel Plant was recommissioned in the 'B' shift of 24th April, 1972 after one month's shut down for annual boiler inspection and repairs. During recommissioning and before stabilisation, sulphurous fumes started escaping into the atmosphere late in that shift, The wind direction being towards Rourkela township the effect of it was felt in the part of the township in the vicinity of the Plant

On preliminary assessment, it appeared that these fumes were tar fumes. However, it was later found that the fumes were from the Sulphuric Acid Plant. This Plant was stopped at about 1.30 am. on 25th April. The atmosphere was clear by about 2.30 am.

This incident caused some inconvenience to the citizens living in the vicinity of the Plant. No report has been received of cases of vomiting. These have been reports only of irritation and coughing.

Corrective action has been promptly taken by the Plant Management and there is now no escape of gases. The causes for the escape of the fumes are being looked into to avoid recurrence.

SHRI ARJUN SETHI: This is the only public sector undertaking in the country which is somehow free from any labour trouble. Yet, it is unfortunate that time and again some kind of disturbance in the style of management takes place because of which the country is losing

crores of rupees as there is loss of production. This is nothing but utter carelessness on the part of the management, as mentioned by the commission which was set up when the roof of the steel melting shop collapsed. Will the production be affected this time? Was the leakage caused by carelessness on the part of the officials? Then, the Minister says in his statement that some inconvenience was caused to the people living near the plant and no report has been received of any case of vomiting. But the newspaper report says:

"Panicky citizens ran out of their houses in night garments only to find thick smoke blanketing the whole town. Those having cars even left the town in a hurry to escape from the smoke screen."

In the face of this, how can the hon. Minister say that only inconvenience has been caused to the citizens?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM: The sulphuric acid plant, from which these fumes appear to have escaped, has got a boiler plant which is necessary for the process adopted for conversion of sulphur di-oxide to sulphur tri-oxide. This boiler is subject to normal inspection procedure, as laid down for other boilers, and every year there is inspection after the completion of which the plant is re-started. Now, when restarting the plant there is sometimes some imbalance in the absorption of the sulphur tri-oxide in the acid and, as a consequence of this, a certain amount of sulphurous fumes escape into the atmosphere. As soon as the operation of the plant stabilises itself the possibility of sulphurous fumes escaping to the atmosphere comes to an end. This takes place roughly about once a year. From what I have been able to find out, nothing of the character which has happened this year has taken place in the past. But, obviously, in view of the difficulties suffered by the people in the town, the Management of the Plant are investigating how exactly it can ensure that such a thing

does not take place and no harm is caused to the people. As a first step, the Management has decided to re-commission this plant only in the day time and not in the dark so that it will be easier to locate the escape of the fumes and take preventive action early. Other steps are also being examined.

So far as the question of vomiting is concerned and the press report that the hon. Member read out, I can only say that the reports in the press are not always accurate. The reports that we have received from the Plant Management only indicate that there was irritation and coughing and no case of vomiting was reported to them.

SHRI ARJUN SETHI : May I know whether the production of the Plant is going to be affected.

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : I do not think there will be any decrease in production. The production of the Plant is not going to be affected.

SHRI NIHAR LASKAR (Karimnagar) : We do not know whether this particular project was started on some very inauspicious day. Otherwise, these incidents would not have occurred. This is a third major incident in the Plant. There must be something wrong somewhere. We have to investigate these things. Also, it is now certain that in spite of the efforts of the Management, you are not going to reach your targeted production of the Plant. If it is so, I would like to know why.

Any kind of leakage in such places is disastrous not only to the people who are working in the Plant itself but also to the people living nearby in the township, as has happened in the present case. So, I would like to know whether the Management have taken foolproof protection against such leakage and, if not, why.

Secondly, I would like to know whether there was some structural defect or otherwise.

Thirdly, I would like to know what would be the immediate or future financial loss to the Plant due to this damage.

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : As to whether it was an auspicious or inauspicious day, I think, the hon. Member is a greater expert in that area than myself.

I do not think the production is going to be affected nor do I think that there will be any loss to the Plant as a result of this. All that has happened is that sulphuric acid fumes have escaped as a result of the stabilisation of the plant not being achieved early enough. But, apart from the inconvenience and the trouble caused to the people, I do not think that production will be affected.

So far as the structural defects are concerned, naturally, the whole equipment is being checked. So far as I have been able to elicit from the Management, we do not think there has been any structural defect. The stabilisation not taking place so quickly is not unnatural. It does happen though we have not had these bad consequences on such a scale earlier.

SHRI NIHAR LASKAR : May I know whether you will reach the production target ever.

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : I do not think we should be too pessimistic about that.

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH (Pupri) : I have no reason to quarrel with the Minister whether there was irritation or coughing or whether there was vomiting. There might have been or might not have been. The Minister might not have been informed. But it is very sad that, in this

[Shri Hari Kishore Singh]
House, two incidents about the sad plight of the people of Orissa have been raised during this week.

I would like to know from the Minister whether he thinks that it was due to bad maintenance. In the case of roof collapse incident it was due to bad maintenance by the authorities of the Plant. Because it was re-commissioned recently and then this incident occurred I want to know whether it was a case of bad maintenance or whether there is somebody in the Plant itself who is deliberately sabotaging the efforts of the Ministry and the Minister himself to improve the working of the Plant and its production.

Secondly, I would like to know the exact effect of the stoppage of this Plant on production. I am not a technical expert in this regard. But I would like to know and the country is of course, anxious about it.

Thirdly I understand that after the roof collapse incident, a high-power committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Lt Gen Loomba. What has happened to the report of that Committee and what action Government has taken on that report? What have the Government done to ensure the safety of the plant on the basis of the report of the Committee?

Further, I understand that an Action Group has been constituted by the Government under the chairmanship of Mr Pathak who is a Member of the Planning Commission. May I know whether the Government would refer the whole question of the maintenance of this plant to this Action Group? Also what steps Government is going to take to ensure that similar things do not happen not only in Rourkela but in other places where big public sector plants are established?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANG-ALAM We have no reason at the moment

to believe that what happened on the 24th night was due to bad maintenance. As I mentioned earlier to the House, there is always the possibility of escape of sulphurous fumes. We have recommissioned the plant after taking down for inspection—and this continues until the plant itself stabilises. The escape is usually at a much lower level than what happened on this occasion. We are checking up why it should have happened. Certainly I do not think there is any comparison between what happened in Rourkela earlier and what happened on this occasion. We have no reason, whatsoever, to believe that anybody in the plant has indulged in deliberate sabotage which has led to this incident.

So far as production is concerned, I have already mentioned—the hon. Member will remember—that it will not affect the production except very marginally.

So far as the report of the high power committee headed by Lt Gen Loomba is concerned, hon. members will, I am sure, appreciate that we have put the report of the committee on the Table of the House, and we have also taken action in two directions—firstly in relation to the persons who have been found in any way responsible for the collapse of the roof by not carrying out their work efficiently, and secondly in tightening up various procedures regarding maintenance so that such an occurrence does not take place again.

The Action Group headed by a Member of the Planning Commission, Shri Pathak, had been to Rourkela and also looked into the matter of maintenance and has made its recommendations for improvement in the maintenance procedures. Therefore, I think, necessary steps are being taken to see that such an incident does not recur.

So far as the steps to be taken in other plants are concerned, naturally, the improvement in maintenance we are trying to achieve is in a coordinated manner for the three plants as a whole.