

[Shrimati Mukul Benerji]
and utilisation of foreign contribution of hospitality by certain persons or associations, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

TWENTY-FOURTH AND TWENTY-FIFTH REPORTS

SHRI JAGANNATH RAO (Chattrapur): I beg to present the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Reports of the Committee on Petitions.

COMMITTEE ON THE WELFARE OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

THIRTY-NINTH REPORT

SHRI D. BASUMATARI (Kokrajhar): I beg to present the Thirty-ninth Report (Hindi and English versions) of the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation—Reservations for and Employment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the India Tourism Development Corporation.

12.07 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. ACCIDENT IN THE CHASNALLA COAL MINES NEAR DHANBAD

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI CHANDRAJIT Yadav): Sir, I rise with a very heavy heart and profound shock to inform the House of the major accident which took place at Chasnalla Colliery of Indian Iron and Steel Company Limited on the 27th December, 1975.

Chasnalla Colliery is situated in the District of Dhanbad in Bihar and is about 25 kilometres from Dhanbad Town. At about 1.35 P.M. on 27th December, 1975 a large volume of water from the old abandoned workings on the rise side suddenly appeared to have rushed into the deeper horizons of the Chasnalla Colliery trapping all the employees who were working at that time. According to the records there were 372 employees inside including three Mining Engineers and 17 member of the Supervisory staff. The flooding of the mine occurred with great severity and suddenness leaving no chance for the workers to escape. The colliery Manager and the Safety Officer had inspected the workings and had come out only a few minutes before the disaster.

The report about this grim tragedy has shocked all of us and our hearts go out to our valient workers and their families.

Messages of sympathy have been received from all over the world.

Immediately after the accident, the Vice Chairman of the Bharat Coking Coal Ltd. alongwith a team of senior officers, Director General of Mines Safety and his rescue team, the District Officers of the Bihar Government and senior officers of the Indian iron and Steel Company Ltd. rushed to the site and started organising recovery, rescue and relief operations. Pumps available with the BCCL were rushed to expedite dewatering operations. Over 600 men and engineers have been working round the clock from the first day for installing and carrying out pumping operations.

The total volume of water to be pumped out from the mine is estimated at about 110 million gallons. The entire mine workings have been flooded and there are only 5 narrow openings linking these workings with the surface. Pumping operations through

narrow and steep openings are extremely difficult both in terms of the number of pumps that can be installed and the speed with which pumping operations can be done. With the available indigenous pumps, a pumping capacity of 9 million gallons per day has since been established. So far over 35 million gallons of water has been pumped out. Five high capacity Soviet submersible pumps along with Soviet Engineers are now at the site and these are being installed. This will increase the pumping capacity by six million gallons per day thereby taking the total installed capacity to 15 million gallons per day. A team of Polish Engineers has also reached the site and they are assisting in the pumping operations.

We are deeply grateful to the Soviet Union and Poland for having promptly airlifted not only the pumps but also the technical personnel to the accident site without any loss of time. We are grateful to the help offered by the United States of America which we could not make use of because of certain technical difficulties. We are also thankful to the generous offers of assistance received from other countries like Federal Republic of Germany and the Commission of the European Economic Community.

Soon after the news reached us, I alongwith my colleague the Labour Minister and senior officials of our Ministries rushed to Chasnalla. The Labour Minister and I have again visited the site last week. Senior officials of the Central and State Governments are now working round the clock to ensure speedy dewatering of the mine and providing relief to the affected families. Everything humanly possible is being done to hasten the dewatering of the mine. While hopes of there being any survivors are very slender, we cannot forget the fact that in earlier mining accidents like the one at Burradhemo in 1956, 11 persons were rescued alive after 19

days. We are therefore giving the highest priority to rescue operations in the hope that we may be able to save some precious lives.

Government have since appointed Justice Ujjal Narain Sinha, retired Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, under Section 24 of the Mines Act, 1952 to hold an inquiry into the causes of and circumstances attending this accident. He will be assisted by technical and specialist assessors.

This is the worst mining disaster in the country. It is a great national tragedy and our heartfelt sympathies are for the affected families. My colleague the Labour Minister and I have personally visited some of these families and we admire the remarkable fortitude and courage with which they have faced this calamity. The State Chief Minister and some of his Cabinet colleagues have also visited Chasnalla and supervised the relief operations. We are extremely grateful to the State authorities for their timely help.

Immediately on reaching the accident spot I announced *ex-gratia* payment of Rs. 1,000/- to each of the families of the affected workers. Besides this, the Government of Bihar also announced an *ex-gratia* payment of Rs. 500/- for each affected family, and from the Coal Mine Welfare Fund, Rs. 250/- per family, of the affected workers is being given. So far, a total amount of over Rs. 5 lakhs has been distributed as *ex-gratia* relief to 290 affected families. I have also announced on the spot, that adequate employment would be provided to the dependents of these families and that all workers, reporting for duty, would be provided with suitable jobs.

The Government of Bihar are also extending additional facilities to the affected families in the shape of further *ex-gratia* relief amounting to Rs. 4 lakhs at the rate of Rs. 1,000/-

[Shri Chandrajit Yadav]

per family, free housing sites and some facilities for education and employment. They have also set up a relief fund for collecting donations for providing long-term relief to the affected families.

The Prime Minister has donated Rs. 4 lakhs from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Donations from various quarters are also coming in and it has been decided to pool these into a Fund called Chasnalla Emergency Relief Fund. A Committee under my Chairmanship consisting of the Union Minister of Labour, Government of India and Minister of Labour, Government of Bihar and President, I.N.T.U.C. has been constituted to administer this Fund, work out a scheme of immediate and long-term benefit to the affected families, supervise and coordinate distribution of relief, intensify relief and other measures, including provision of employment to the dependents. The Ministry of Labour, Government of India have also set up a team consisting of various officers which is contacting each affected family to ascertain its needs and to provide it with immediate and long-term relief. Welfare Centres have also been opened at Chasnalla by HISCO for medical and other assistance to the affected families. The Ministries of Railways and Communications are also extending special facilities to the affected families.

The magnitude of the accident is such that it calls for rescue and relief operations on a gigantic scale. I would like to place on record the spontaneity of response in providing help, cooperation and assistance from the Government of Bihar and various organisations like Bharat Coking Coal Limited, the Directorate-General of Mines Safety, Coal India Limited and the Indian Air Force. The workers at Chasnalla and the family members of the trapped workers have shown remarkable fortitude and courage, for, without their help and cooperation, we

would not have succeeded in mounting the rescue operation on the scale at which it is being done in the mines.

I would like, respectfully to repeat what the President said in his Address yesterday and to reiterate that Government will spare no efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the affected families and to improve conditions of safety for workers. The Government fully shares the deep concern of the Members of this House for this accident and the tragedy that has befallen the workers at Chasnalla. I would appeal to them to bear with us for the present, until the rescue operations are completed and the Court of Inquiry gives its findings on the causes and circumstances attending this accident.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Alipore): We should permit discussion on the statement made by the hon. Minister just now, which contained hardly anything which has not appeared in the papers already. There are many knowledgeable people, Sir, in this House, connected with various aspects of the collieries including the trade unions who have some information at their disposal. They would like to share it with the House. It would help in the subsequent Inquiry also. People here will speak with some responsibility, I think, and not use this occasion for some agitation. Notices are being given. We know about the rules and due notices will be given. This great tragedy has cast a deep gloom on the entire country and its shock has been felt throughout the country. I would, therefore, request you earnestly to please permit Parliament to discuss this matter so that various aspects of it can be brought out and lines of enquiry can be suggested, as there are many people here on both sides of the House who are capable of doing it.

THE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF ATOMIC ENERGY, MINISTER OF ELECTRONICS AND MINISTER OF SPACE (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI): I only want to say that we also share the sense of shock and anxiety. I have no objection to having a discussion here. It is up to you, Sir, to decide the time.

MR. SPEAKER: When the notices come, I will consider them.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah): Sufficient time must be allowed.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): Time should be allotted by the Business Advisory Committee.

ELECTION TO COMMITTEE

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

SHRI R. K. SINHA (Fauzabad): I beg to move:

"That the members of this House do proceed to elect in the manner required by sub-rule (3) of Rule 254 read with sub-rule (1) of Rule 311 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, one member from among themselves to serve as a member of the Committee on Estimates for the unexpired portion of the term of the Committee vice Shri Muhammed Khuda Buksh died."

MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the members of this House do proceed to elect in the manner required by sub-rule (3) of Rule 254 read with sub-rule (1) of rule 311 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, one member from among themselves to serve as a member of the Com-

mittee on Estimates for the unexpired portion of the term of the Committee vice Shri Muhammed Khuda Buksh died."

The motion was adopted.

12.16 hrs.

BETWA RIVER BOARD BILL*

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Board for the creation of a reservoir at Rajghat by construction, on behalf of the Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, of a dam on the Betwa river at Rajghat and for the regulation of such reservoir.

MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Board for the creation of a reservoir at Rajghat by construction, on behalf of the Government of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, of a dam on the Betwa river at Rajghat and for the regulation of such reservoir."

The motion was adopted.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I introduce the Bill.

DELHI DEVELOPMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL*

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Delhi Development Act, 1957.

*Published in Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II, Section 2 dated 6-1-76.