

STATEMENT RE: ACCIDENTS IN  
COLLIERIES NEAR ASANSOL.

The Minister of Labour and Employment and Planning (Shri Nanda): Sir, I came back from Asansol and Dhanbad areas last night. I am laying on the Table of the House a statement giving detailed information regarding the two occurrences, one in the Chinakuri Colliery in the Asansol area and the other in the Central Bhowrah Colliery in Jharia

At Chinakuri, 173 persons who are still underground must be presumed dead. Of those rescued one was dead already, and three died a little later in the hospital. The condition of three more, who are suffering from acute gas poisoning, is serious. At Central Bhowrah, 23 persons were trapped by the rushing waters and may be presumed to have died by drowning

Two Courts to inquire into the causes of these accidents and to fix responsibility for their occurrence are being set up immediately. The Inquiry into the Chinakuri disaster will be presided over by Justice Shri S. N. Guha Roy of the Calcutta High Court. The Central Bhowrah inquiry is being entrusted to a Divisional Commissioner from Bihar.

While these two Courts will deal with the two tragedies, I feel we must immediately examine the whole question of safety in mines in relation to management practices, workers' training and the arrangements for check and inspection as well as the preventive measures that can be taken. For this purpose I propose shortly to call a conference of representatives of mine workers, mine owners and experts. To prepare the ground for this conference a Steering Group is being formed immediately.

As the two recent disasters will be the subject matter of Courts of Inquiry, I do not propose to make any further comments on them.

Shri Muhammed Elias (Howrah): We had also an opportunity to visit that area and it has been reported by the workers in regard to the reasons for the disaster—but it cannot be told just now. So we would suggest to the Ministry of Labour to take one representative from the Trade Unions on the inquiry. And this request has been made also by the Trade Unions of the locality. We feel that if a trade union representative is taken on the inquiry, then the inquiry can be properly conducted and many of the reasons can be revealed in the inquiry. Therefore my submission is that the Ministry may consider this suggestion.

Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan (Coimbatore): I had also been to the area and I found that after the Minister's visit and after he met some of the workers and recorded their statements, there is a tendency on the side of the management to intimidate the workers from giving further information before the Court of Inquiry that is to be set up. So what I would plead with the hon. Minister is that steps should be taken in order to safeguard the workers from such intimidation, so that they will come forward and give open evidence, as has already been done when we had gone there.

Shri Jaipal Singh (Ranchi West—Reserved—Sch. Tribes): I do not quite understand why in the case of the Bhowrah inquiry it is the Divisional Commissioner who is going to be in charge of the inquiry and in the other case a High Court Judge. I would like to know the reason.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (Sasaram): As regards the question of safety in mines, the whole matter should be discussed here. It is no good discussing it in a committee. It may be taken up in the House. Such accidents are occurring very frequently.

Mr. Speaker: Let the reports be here.

**Dr. Ram Subhag Singh:** I am not referring to the Inquiry. I am referring to the question of safety in mines. There is an Inspectorate to enquire into the safety of mines, and that question may be debated here.

**Shri Radha Raman (Chandni Chowk):** On a point of information, may I know whether the Government proposes to appoint some assessors to be associated with this enquiry?

**Shri Nanda:** I shall deal with all these questions. With regard to the representation of workers on the enquiry, I can assure the hon. Member that they will have full opportunity of having their say and that the enquiry will be conducted properly. But, I do not think it is the practice or it would be really very suitable to have one workers' representative on the committee of enquiry. At any rate, I will give further thought to this matter.

Regarding the question of intimidation, I spent a considerable time there in that area. I have met a number of workers, I have spoken to them and I have told them that they can fully rely on us with regard to their position and that anybody will be free without any kind of hindrance to have their say before the court of enquiry and there will be no penalisation on that account. I can assure the House on that score.

We are going to have assessors also. Among the assessors there will be experts and there will be others also who are Members of Parliament and one or two experts in the case of the Asansol accident.

We have a High Court Judge in one case and only a Divisional Commissioner in the other case because I found that this other case of Dhanbad accident was, from all account, a very straight-forward matter. It was a very clear position and it did not require any, very complicated handling. So, I thought that it would be quite enough to have a Commissioner. There will, of of course, be assessors to help the second enquiry also.

**Shri B. Das Gupta (Purulia):** On a point of information, I understand from the newspapers that a memorandum has been submitted from the Managers Association to the hon. Minister. I think it will be better if the hon. Minister circulates that memorandum to the Members.

**Shri Nanda:** I forgot to deal with the suggestion that the House should take up discussion of this matter. Certainly. It will be more useful and helpful if that is done after I have that material with me on the basis of which discussion could take place in the House. On the material which I have—I have collected considerable material in the course of my stay there, met representatives of the Mining Managers Association and others—immediately I decided that without loss of time we should proceed to look into all aspects of the question with the help of those who can assist in the process. All this process, my idea is, should not take a long time. In two or three months at the most, all the examination with the help of the parties concerned and experts should be completed. I am thinking of having the Industrial Committee on Coal to meet immediately after that so that we can finalise all these suggestions with a view to immediate action. These things can certainly be taken up in the House for discussion.

**Dr. Ram Subhag Singh:** When I made the suggestion that it may be discussed on the floor of the House, the reason why I put it forward was, because, about two years ago, two or three similar accidents had occurred, and at that time, I had visited one of the mines. There, the Inspectorate was, according to me, not functioning properly. Subsequent to that, I raised that matter in the form of questions and the reply that I got was that all the mines were properly being examined. Again, such serious accidents have occurred. Therefore, I think we must not await the result or outcome of the enquiry. We must straightaway proceed to discuss the working of the Mines Inspectorate.

**Shri Nanda:** I will have no objection to an immediate discussion if it would be helpful to avert a single accident. I thought the House may be in a better position to discuss that if they have got something more to which I am going to attend immediately. They will have also complete information on the working of the Inspectorate on the side of the administration and all the information that can be gathered from any source will be analysed properly and discussed. And also whatever flows from it in the shape of suggestions will be there before the House with my recommendation. If the House thinks that a discussion could be useful, I have no objection.

**Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan:** Could the Minister enlighten us with regard to the relief or compensation that is being paid to the families of the victims—we would like to know about that—whether the relief that has been paid or announced so far is only interim or whether it is the final amount and secondly also with regard to the alternative employment for these workers who will now be thrown out of employment as a result of these mines going out of production?

**Shri Nanda:** I gave attention to both these matters during my stay there. What is reported to have been given to the members of the family of the deceased is only immediate relief both from the employers and from the Ministry and from the Mining welfare fund. Arrangements have been made to see that the compensation amount is paid very expeditiously.

**Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan:** The other part of the question regarding alternative employment?

**Shri Nanda:** That also I discussed with the management and others. I am assured that there will be a lay-off period and if it is found that work cannot be resumed quickly, then, they will be absorbed in other places.

**Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan:** In the same company?

**Shri Nanda:** Some other places; same company probably.

**Shri Jaipal Singh:** I hope you will agree with me and I venture to hope the Government will take the cue from you. I think a debate at an early stage would enable the enquiry to proceed in a more comprehensive manner. Because, if we were to wait for three months for the report, we would be making certain suggestions that would be outside the particular enquiry. Some of us come from those areas and it does not necessarily mean that we should also participate in that enquiry. Nonetheless, there have been a series of similar accidents recurring. I think this House would be serving a useful purpose in airing its views before the enquiry begins.

**Shri Nanda:** In this connection, I would add a suggestion. I have mentioned a meeting of representatives of workers and employers. If it is intended that we may further this cause of safety, instead of a discussion of this kind, if Members of Parliament interested in the subject meet and discuss it—informally, possibly it will help. I may point out that Members of Parliament may be associated in that Conference also. At the steering stage also I would like to do that if it can help.

**Shri Mohiuddin (Secunderabad):** The Demands for Grants for Labour Ministry will be coming up in March. Instead of a few hours as usual being allotted for these Demands for Grants, you may Sir, kindly allot more hours so that this question can also be discussed at that time.

**Shri Nanda:** I think we may take it up separately.

**Shri Melkote (Raichur):** In the papers we see report of a similar accident in Kothagudam two, three days back. Is the Minister aware of it? Would he also include the papers received from Kothagudam for the discussion?

**Shri Nanda:** Yes.

**Shri Balasaheb Patil (Miraj) rose—**

**Mr. Speaker:** If hon. Members stand up one after the other, what can I do?

Hon. Members must think about it in advance. If it is an exceptional matter which could not have occurred to them, of course, they can ask by way of supplementary. I have allowed so many supplementaries. We must proceed with the work. I am sorry. To catch my eye is easy. If hon. Members are interested in particular subject, if all of them get up first, they need not get up again. I make a note of all of them, and call them one after the other. But the hon. Member does not rise in the first, second or third round, but after all the Members have spoken, gets up with a new thing. I think I must put a stop to it there. Comma till then, full stop there.

CONTROL OF SHIPPING (CONTINUANCE) BILL\*

The Minister of Transport and Communications (Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to continue the Control of Shipping Act, 1947, for a further period.

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to continue the Control of Shipping Act, 1947, for a further period"

*The motion was adopted.*

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: I introduce the Bill.

APPROPRIATION BILL\*

The Deputy Minister of Finance (Shri B. R. Bhagat): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain further sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the service of the financial year 1957-58.

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to authorise payment

and appropriation of certain further sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the service of the financial year 1957-58."

*The motion was adopted.*

Shri B. R. Bhagat: I introduce\*\* the Bill.

APPROPRIATION BILL

The Deputy Minister of Finance (Shri B. R. Bhagat): I beg to move†:

"That the Bill to authorise payment and appropriation of certain further sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the service of the financial year 1957-58, be taken into consideration"

Mr. Speaker: So far as this Appropriation Bill is concerned, what is the hurry? We will sit for three more months. Why should not normal notice be given in respect of the Appropriation Bill? Why should anybody force it on me? This kind of urgency and emergency will not be allowed by me except when it is absolutely necessary.

Hon. Members know possibly—I do not want to give a clue to them—even with respect to an Appropriation Bill, some matters which have not been discussed at a particular time can be given notice of under the rules and under the Constitution. They may like to discuss some matters. Why should I hustle the House? This will stand over till tomorrow.

CENTRAL SALES TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Deputy Minister of Finance (Shri B. R. Bhagat): I beg to move†:

"That the Bill further to amend the Central Sales Act, 1956, be taken into consideration"

\*Published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II—Section 2, dated 25-2-58. pp. 228-229 and 223—227.

\*\*Introduced with the recommendation of the President.

†Moved with the recommendation of the President.