

12.05 hrs.

DEATHS DUE TO COLLAPSE OF ROPE  
BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER TEESTA

**Mr. Speaker:** I have received notices of adjournment motions by three hon. Members, Shri S. M. Banerjee and others, regarding—

“Immediate need to discuss the serious mishap in North Sikkim resulting in death of 62 people including 4 Indian Army Officers due to collapse of rope bridge over the river Teesta.

(Times of India dated 5th September, 1961.)”.

What is the position?

**The Deputy Minister of Defence (Shri Raghuramaiah):** Sir, I regret to report that we have received information that on the 2nd September at about 17:30 hours a party of civil and military personnel belonging to the Border Roads Organisation who were engaged in the construction of the suspension bridge at Toong approximately 40 miles north of Gangtok met with an accident. The accident might have been caused by the anchorage of the bridge giving way. According to available information two officers, two JCOs, 8 Other Ranks and 25 civilian labour are missing and are feared to have been drowned. Officiating Chief Engineer proceeded immediately to the scene of accident. Further details are being awaited. Next of kin are being informed. We are also ordering an immediate enquiry. I may add that the question of payment of compensation to the families of the deceased is also receiving attention.

**Shri S. M. Banerjee:** In the newspaper report it has been stated that nobody has been recovered so far. I want to know whether the dead bodies of these Army officers and those Tibetan Khampas who were working along with them were recovered. What is the information as to whether the dead bodies have been recovered?

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Minister may answer all the questions together. Shri Braj Raj Singh.

**Shri Braj Raj Singh (Ferozabad):** May I know whether the circumstances under which this rope bridge collapsed have been ascertained? Why was it that adequate precautions were not taken for this? We are all very much interested in the road development in this area because this area happens to be the border area with Tibet. In this strategic area when such accidents happen people may sometimes suspect that there might be some sabotage.

**Mr. Speaker:** He wants to know whether it is due to sabotage or it is in the natural course.

**Shri Sadhan Gupta (Calcutta—East):** rose—

**Mr. Speaker:** Shri Sadhan Gupta is not a party to this adjournment motion. Very well.

**Shri Sadhan Gupta:** I want to know whether this rope bridge was constructed departmentally or by private contractors, and, if so, whether there was any defect in the construction which caused the collapse.

**Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri (Nabadwip):** I have tabled a short notice question on this. Perhaps when the hon. Minister has more information, will he kindly make some sort of a statement? May the question be allowed.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is not a short notice question; I have got a ‘calling attention’ notice.

**Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri:** I have tabled both. It is far you to allow whichever you may like.

**Shri T. B. Vittal Rao:** The hon. Minister has said that some enquiry is being held. Could we know the nature of the enquiry, whether it will be a judicial enquiry or will it be the usual court of Inquiry?

**Shri Raghuramaiah:** I would like to say that Government are as much perturbed by the accident, perhaps much more in view of its gravity and the urgent nature of the work that is being done there. The enquiry will be by a high Army officer as is usual in these cases.

As for the bodies, I said that they are missing. At present, as far as my information goes, no body has yet been recovered.

About the bridge, on the 27th August the existing suspension bridge there was washed away by high floods. This was a temporary bridge which was under construction.

As to the exact reason how it could have happened, I have already indicated that according to the information I have it might be due to the anchorage giving way, but it is to find out the exact reason for it that we are proposing to order an enquiry.

**Shri S. M. Banerjee:** Bodies are missing and intimation has been sent to the next of kin that they have died.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, Order; the hon. Member himself will put a question, if the bodies are missing, you did not intimate. If they are recovered, both the Government and the next of kin will only be too happy—not merely if they are recovered, but recovered in whole. If intimation is not given, the hon. Member himself would have tabled another Adjournment motion why intimation has not been given.

**Shri Braj Raj Singh:** Can we expect from the Minister a statement giving detailed information about this before we adjourn?

**Mr. Speaker:** Before we adjourn, if he gets any more information, he will try to place it on the Table of the House. If hon. Members had waited, he would have done so. Hon. Members must have faith in the Government. I do not think there is any need for this adjournment motion. It

is due to an accident. Therefore, I am not called upon to give my consent to this adjournment motion.

Shri Braj Raj Singh has given a Call attention Notice. I will call it on the 8th.

#### 12.11 hrs.

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

#### REJECTION OF APPLICATION FOR REHABILITATION COMPENSATION CLAIMS

**Shri Inder J. Malhotra** (Jammu and Kashmir): Under Rule 197, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Rehabilitation and Minority Affairs to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

“The situation arising out of the large-scale rejection of the rehabilitation compensation claims of displaced persons settled in Jammu and Kashmir State.

**The Minister of Rehabilitation and Minority Affairs (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna):** Claims in respect of immovable property left in Pakistan were invited under Ordinance No. 5 of 1950 issued on the 19th January, 1950, which was subsequently replaced by the Displaced Persons (Claims) Act of 1950. All displaced persons from West Pakistan, whether settled in Jammu and Kashmir State or elsewhere, were, according to Section 5 of the Act, required to register their claims from 1st July, 1950. The last date for receipt of applications was fixed as 30th September, 1950 but was subsequently extended to 30th November, 1950. Delays in submission of applications were freely condoned by the Claims Commissioners up to January, 1952. Subsequently delays were even condoned up to 31st August, 1952 in hard cases.

One thousand three hundred and thirty Compensation applications from displaced persons settled in