

Medical facilities are also available through the following institutions:—

Hospitals/Dispensaries	.. 736
Ayurvedic Aushadhalayas	.. 1510
Upgraded dispensaries	.. 87

The State Government have proposals for augmenting these facilities further.

MR. SPEAKER: The question Hour is over.

(Interruptions)

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

Mining Accident near Mael Colliery in Karanpura Coal Field

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2. SHRI DAMODAR PANDEY:
SHRI BIRENDER SINGH
RAO

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of miners were killed in a mining accident near Mael colliery in Karanpura coalfield;

(b) if so, the number of persons killed and the number injured;

(c) whether the mine was working with the knowledge of Government;

(d) what action Government propose to take against the persons responsible for this accident and also to prevent future accidents like this; and

(e) whether it is in the knowledge of Government that there are several mines working in that area in the same manner with or without lease and appropriate permission of Government?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR
(SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It has been reported by the Director General of Mines Safety that six persons died and three others seriously injured in an accident that took place on 22nd February, 1975 while illegal excavation for coal was being done by several villagers at the North Bank of the Damodar River opposite Mael Colliery in District Giridih (Bihar).

(c) The office rs of the Directorate General of Mines Safety had in November, 1973 brought to the notice of the concerned local authorities of the State Government the incidence of this illegal mining

(d) The Government are examining as to what action can be taken under the Mines Act. The Government are also considering the question of setting up a Court of Enquiry under the Mines Act to go into the causes and circumstances of this accident, as also the more general questions of such illegal mining in the context of safety.

(e) The existence of such illegal mining has been brought to the notice of the State Government of Bihar and of the Department of Coal.

(Interruptions)

एक माननीय सदस्य : पुलिस ऊपर उनको मार रही है आप रुकवाइये ।

(Interruptions)

श्री जाबुवंत खोटे : उसकी उन्होंने गर्दन पकड़ ली है और गर्दन पकड़ कर ले गए हैं . . .

MR SPEAKER: Order, please. Whoever obstructs the proceedings from the gallery has to be removed. He was resisting the Watch and Ward persons.

श्री जाबुवंत खोटे : इस हाउस में यह चीज होती है तो क्या होगा। आपकी हाजिरी में, आपकी मौजूदगी में यह सब हो रहा है

और आप यह सब देख रहे हैं। गर्दन पकड़ कर ले जाना ठीक नहीं है। एक आदमी के ऊपर पांच पांच और दस दस पिल पड़े थे। यह तरीका ठीक नहीं है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : उसको जब बाहर ले जा रहे थे।

he was resisting with his arms. I saw him.

वह उनको मार रहा था।

श्री जाबबंत खोटे : उसको निकाला जा सकता था लेकिन इस तरह से नहीं कि गर्दन पकड़ कर निकाला जाता और एक पर दस-दस आदमी पिल पड़े। ऐसा हुआ तो एक दिन ऐसा भी आएगा हाउस से जबकि जो पार्टी इन पावर है उसके लोग अपने बच्चों को छोड़ कर भा जाए और हमारे गले घोटने लग जाए . . .

अध्यक्ष महोदय : ऐसा कभी नहीं होगा, ऐसा दिन कभी नहीं आएगा। ऐसे कभी नहीं होने दिया जाएगा। आप बेफिक्र रहें। कभी ऐसा नहीं हो सकता है।

श्री बामोदर पांडे : मेरे प्रश्न का मन्त्री महोदय ने सन्तोषजनक उत्तर नहीं दिया है। यह पहली दुर्घटना वहां नहीं हुई है, दूसरी हुई है . . . (*Interruptions*) इस में दस पन्द्रह आदमी मारे गए हैं। अभी तक आठ लाखें बरामद हो चुकी हैं। मैंने पूछा था कि आपको ऐसी जानकारी है या नहीं कि इस तरह की खानें वहां चल रही हैं कि पट्टा होने अथवा पट्टा और सरकार की उचित . . . (इंटरप्शंज) अनुमति न होने पर इसी प्रकार कार्य कर रही हैं। इसकी कोई जानकारी नहीं दी गई है . . . (*Interruptions*) जो उचित कार्रवाई वहां उत्तरदायी व्यक्तियों को श्रमिकों की सुरक्षा हेतु करनी चाहिये थी वह भी उन्होंने नहीं की। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस तरह की कितनी खदानें उस इलाके में चल रही हैं और अगर वे अवैधानिक ढंग से चल रही हैं तो

उनको बन्द कराने के लिए क्या कार्रवाई सरकार कर रही है तथा वहां जो काम करने वाले मजदूर हैं उनको सुरक्षा प्रदान करने के लिए, उनको इस प्रकार की दुर्घटनाओं से बचाने के लिए सरकार क्या उपाय कर रही है . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: Mr. Speaker, Sir . . . (*Interruptions*)

श्री जाबबंत खोटे : अगर कोई विजिटर स्लोगन रेंज करता है, नारे लगाता है तो उसको वहां से रिमूव कर देना चाहिये यह तो ठीक है। लेकिन रिमूव करने का भी एक तरीका होता है, एक ढंग होता है। यह तरीका नहीं है जिस तरीके से रिमूव किया गया है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : हाउस में जब यह मामला आया नब देखा जाएगा।

श्री जाबबंत खोटे : इस तरह से हाउस को चले देना हमारे लिए मुश्किल हो जाएगा और आपके लिए भी हाउस को चलाना मुश्किल होगा।

श्री बामोदर पांडे : यह इस तरह की दूसरी खान दुर्घटना है। कई आदमी मारे गए हैं। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि कोर्ट आप इन-क्वायरी विधान में विलम्ब क्यों हो रहा है। क्यों नहीं अक्सिलम्ब इमकी घोषणा की जा रही है? क्या कारण है कि सुरक्षा व्यवस्था की उपेक्षा की जाती है, कड़ाई से नियमों का पालन नहीं करवाया जाता है . . . (इंटरप्शंज)

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: Mr. Speaker, Sir . . . (*Interruptions*)

श्री बामोदर पांडे : अध्यक्ष महोदय, इस एक्सीडेंट के बाद हिमालीय कोलरी में फिर दुर्घटना हुई जिसमें 8 लाखें अभी तक बरामद हुई हैं। न मालूम कितने लोग और मरे हैं। इस मामले में अभी तक कोर्ट आप इन्क्वायरी क्यों नहीं बैठाई गई?

(*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : जो भी होगा इस हाउस के सामने प्रायेगा ।

(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : जो सिक्योरिटी के बारे में हैं, वह तो हमें फल्लो करना पड़ता है ।

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: We are contemplating about the appointment of a Court of Inquiry to go not only into the reasons of this accident, but also the general question of such illegal mining. This is what we are proposing to do.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Shri Birendra Singh Rao.

SHRI BIRENDER SINGH RAO: How can I put a question, Sir? I cannot hear one word of what is being said.

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: We all want to hear Shri Birender Singh Rao.

SHRI BIRENDER SINGH RAO: Before I put my supplementaries I want order to be restored in the House.

श्री जांबवंत बोटे : अध्यक्ष महोदय, हाउस को एडजोर्न कीजिए ।

(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : माननीय सदस्य बैठ जायें ।

(Interruptions)

(At this stage Shri Janeshwar Misra and some other hon. Members left the House.)

(Interruptions)

12.16 hrs.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please

SHRI BIRENDER SINGH RAO: Sir, I could not hear what the Minister said. Will you kindly ask the Minister to repeat the replies that he has given?

श्री जांबवंत बोटे : अध्यक्ष महोदय, पाइंट ऑफ ऑर्डर . . .

अध्यक्ष महोदय : इस हाउस की परम्परा है, जो प्रादमी पकड़ा गया है उसका केस हाउस के सामने प्रायेगा और हाउस इसके बारे में फैसला करेगा । उसी वक्त आपने जो कहना हो वह कह लीजिये ।

श्री जांबवंत बोटे : अध्यक्ष महोदय, जब एक इम्पार्टेंट क्वेश्चन इस हाउस में आ रहा है जिसका जवाब माननीय मंत्री महोदय दे रहे हैं, जिसके ऊपर कई सप्लीमेंटरी क्वेश्चन पूछे जा सकते हैं, आज हमारे सदन के अपोजीशन के बैचेज खाली हैं (Interruptions) ऐसी अवस्था में सप्लीमेंटरी क्वेश्चन पूछने का सदस्यों का जो अधिकार है, उसमें वे वंचित हो जायेंगे । इस लिए मेरी दूरदवास्त है कि कम से कम यह क्वेश्चन कल के लिए सन्पेड कर दीजिए ।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप इस पर अपना रुलिंग दीजिए ।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : वाक-आउट के बाद हाउस का काम रुकता नहीं है ।

श्री जांबवंत बोटे : मैं कुबूल करता हूँ कि कुछ सदस्यों के न रहने से काम नहीं रुक सकता है । लेकिन पार्लियामेंटरी डेमोक्रेसी में कई प्रिसिडेंट तैयार होते हैं । (Interruptions) कल श्री धारिया ने इन लोगों की पार्लियामेंटरी डेमोक्रेसी सिखाई है । इन के घर के लोग सिखायेंगे ? हम क्या सिखायेंगे ? जैसा कि मैंने कहा है, पार्लियामेंटरी डेमोक्रेसी में कई प्रिसिडेंट तैयार होते हैं । आप यह नया प्रिसिडेंट तैयार कीजिए कि ऐसी अवस्था में

यह इम्पार्टेन्ट क्वेश्चन कल के लिए ससपेंड कर दीजिए, ताकि आपोजीशन के सदस्य कल सप्लीमेंटरी सवाल पूछ सकें ।

प्रधक्ष महोदय : यह मेरी बस की बात नहीं है । मैं इसको नहीं रोक सकता हूँ ।

श्री जाम्बवंत धोटे : आप रोक सकते हैं आप हाउस से इजाजत मांगिये ।

प्रधक्ष महोदय : न तो मुझे भ्रष्टयार है कि मैं इसको रोक दू और न ही ऐसा कोई कल है कि अगर कुछ सदस्य हाउस में न हों, तो कार्यवाही को रोक दिया जाये । आपने हाउस से इजाजत मागने के लिए कहा है । क्या हाउस की यह राय है कि इसको रोकना चाहिए ?

कई माननीय सदस्य : नो, नो ।

श्री जाम्बवंत धोटे : तो मैं इस सदन से वाक-आउट करता हूँ ।

(Shri Jambuwant Dhote then left the House)

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, let the Minister kindly reply again.

SHRI BIRENDER SINGH RAO: I have not been able to follow a single word, what has the Minister said and what supplementaries were asked. You may kindly ask him to repeat it.

MR. SPEAKER: Kindly repeat the reply.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It has been reported by the Director General of Mines Safety that six persons died and three others seriously injured in an accident that took place on 22nd February, 1975 while illegal excavation for coal was

being done by several villagers at the North bank of the Damodar River opposite Mael Colliery in District Giridih (Bihar).

(c) The officers of the Directorate General of Mines Safety had in November, 1973, brought to the notice of the concerned local authorities of the State Government the incidence of this illegal minig.

(d) The Government are examining as to what action can be taken under the Mines Act. The Government are also considering the question of setting up a Court of Inquiry under the Mines Act to go into the causes and circumstances of this accident, as also the more general questions of such illegal mining in the context of safety.

(e) The existence of such illegal mining has been brought to the notice of the State Government of Bihar and of the Department of Coal.

श्री दामोदर पांडे : प्रधक्ष महोदय, मन्त्री महोदय ने जो जवाब दिया है, वह बिल्कुल भ्रमन्तोषजनक है । मैं उम्मीद करता था कि मैंने जो विस्तृत सवाल रखे हैं, उनका जवाब भी एक विस्तृत विवरण के साथ दिया जायगा । लेकिन ऐसा नहीं किया गया । मैंने पूछा था कि इस तरह की कितनी खदानें गैर-कानूनी तरीके से चलती हैं ।

प्रधक्ष महोदय : मैंने आप को इजाजत नहीं दी । आप सवाल कर चुके हैं । श्री बीरेन्द्र सिंह राव ।

SHRI BIRENDER SINGH RAO: The hon. Minister has not stated definitely whether it was in the notice of the Government that illegal mining was going on in this particular place where six poor labourers were killed in an accident. Evasively, in a very vague manner they have said that in November 1973 the Director of Mines Safety reported to the State

Government that illegal mining was taking place and this accident has taken place in February 1975. I request the hon. Minister to clarify whether it was not the duty of the Director General to see that the Mining Act was enforced and that steps were taken to see that the State Government moved. If the State Government did not move some action should have been taken to save the lives of those labourers. Secondly, he has admitted that illegal excavations were taking place; there was the incidence of illegal mining. This too had been brought to the notice of the State Government. As regards this particular accident, where six labourers were killed, he says that the Government are considering ways how to enforce the Mining Act. Would he be pleased to state when the Mining Act was framed. After that the Government has not been able to pay attention at all how to enforce the Mining Act.

It all appears to my mind, I would ask the hon Minister to say whether it is correct or not. that illegal mining on a large-scale is taking place with the collusion of the officers of the Mining Department and the coal mines department. Have the Government taken any action against any of the officers who had defaulted in checking illegal mining? They have put the whole burden on the State Government. They seem to have no responsibility about illegal mining in that area. Lastly, I ask whether the Government are encouraging deliberately illegal mining without any permission or licence because of the acute shortage of coal in the country and the Government's incompetence to meet the demand.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: I deny the allegation that the Government is deliberately encouraging illegal mining. Let us be clear; with respect to illegal mining nobody gives notice of illegal mining. It is done without the knowledge of the authorities. If it is done with the knowledge

of the authorities, it is not illegal mining. Under section 4 of the Mines Regulation Act necessary licences will have to be taken and under section 16 notice will have to be given to the Mines Safety Authority, Director General of Mines Safety, for inspecting the mine and for saying whether the particular undertaking could be allowed to work there, whether there are adequate safety measures. Otherwise it is illegal mining. In the case of illegal mining, no licence is taken, as I explained and the Director General of Mines Safety cannot allow work on those mines. It says here that on a report dated 30 September 1974 from the Director General of Mines Safety that unauthorised illegal mines on a large scale are working in different areas, the matter was brought to the notice of the department of coal on 15-10-1974. The department had been sending reminders subsequently also. As I said earlier, in 1973 illegal mining in this area had been brought to the notice of the State Government. He would appreciate that, as far as the department of mines or the Director General of Mines Safety is concerned, it may not be able to take any action with regard to illegal mining but wherever any accident comes to the notice of the DGMS, just like the fire brigade which goes even in the case of arson, they go to the place and see that further damage is not done and they try to help the people. That is the position. In regard to this accident, the matter came to the notice of the Director General of Mines Safety on 23rd February and the accident is supposed to have taken place on 22nd at 8 A.M. Immediately they rushed to the spot and in fact they had taken preventive measures to see that further damage was not done and sent an interim report on the 25th. They had taken prompt action in this regard. A person undertaking illegal mining, a person who is committing theft, is not going to give notice to the authorities concerned. That is why we are examining about a Court of Inquiry not only to go into the question of this particular acci-

dent, how it has taken place, but also to take necessary criminal action in mines, and the concerned authorities have also reported to the police in order to investigate about the actual accident that has taken place and the time involved in it and also to find out how many actually died. According to the information supplied to us, six bodies have been recovered and three persons were injured. There could be more also because immediately after the accident, it is reported the bodies were removed by the villagers themselves who had been participating in this illegal mining. The matter has been brought to the notice of the police and the police are investigating into this matter. At this stage we do not know how many bodies would be further recovered and the actual extent of the damage itself.

SHRI BIRENDER SINGH RAO: The Minister's statement is contradictory. In reply to my supplementary he has stated that illegal mining does not come to the notice of the Government, that only if somebody goes and sees that illegal mining is taking place, action can be taken, but in the original statement he has definitely stated that the incidence of illegal mining in the area has been brought to the notice of the State Government. This means that Government was aware of illegal mining going on on some considerable scale in that area and that the matter had been reported to the State Government and that no further action was taken by the Director General of the State Government to stop it. Secondly he has stated that the case has been reported to the police, but earlier he did not give this specific information in reply to part (d) of the question which reads:

"what action Government propose to take against the persons responsible for this accident and also to prevent future accidents like this,"

As he has now come out with more

latest position, whether any person has been arrested by the police so far, and if only a case has been lodged with the police and the enquiry is going on or whether an enquiry will be set up to find out the causes of this accident and to suggest measures to prevent such accidents in future. I would like to know what specific action has been taken to arrest the guilty persons and if they have not been arrested so far, does it not prove definitely that those persons are big people with influence and they were doing this illegal mining with the connivance of your officers and also of the State Government concerned?

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: With great respect I submit there is no contradiction in the answers I have given. I have stated subsequently that this matter of illegal mining had been brought to the notice of the State Government. The Director General of Mines Safety comes into the picture only if there is an accident or in case notice is given of mining work being undertaken by a person to whom licence has been given under section 16 of the Mines Act. The authorities concerned then visit the place and find out whether the particular mine satisfies the conditions necessary for undertaking the activity of mining. In this case though the attention of the State Government had been drawn to the general question of illegal mining, whether a particular accident would take place or not could not be brought to the notice of the Mines Safety Authority unless they know that a particular illegal mining at a particular date was going to take place. If it is a continuous activity that is something different. Whether it is a continuous or intermittent activity, these matters are not known to us but it has come to the notice of the concerned authorities that illegal mining has been taking place there and it has been brought to the notice of the concerned authorities because the

authority to check such illegal mining in this case. That is the action that we have so far taken.

In regard to part (d) of the question as far as Director General of Mines Safety in the Labour Ministry is concerned, he can take action only under the Mines Act. I had indicated earlier the action contemplated by the Government under the Mines Act. With respect to the general question that has been asked I said the attention of the police has been drawn and the police are investigating; because it almost amounts to a theft under the I.P.C., they are investigating. At this stage I do not have any information whether the police have arrested anybody; the scope of the investigation and the stage at which the investigation remains

श्री नरसिंह नारायण पांडेय : क्या माननीय मन्त्री जी कं मानूम है कि इस माइन के इंसीडेंट के बाद हिमालान में पहली मार्च को भी इसी तरह में एक्सीडेंट हुआ जिसमें 8 आदमी मर गए और अभी तक यह पता नहीं है कि कितने आदमियों की और मृत्यु हुई है क्योंकि अभी भी उसका मलबा हटाया जा रहा है ? क्या सरकार ने इस सम्बन्ध में कोई कार्यवाही की या स्टेट गवर्नमेंट ने आपको इन्फार्मेशन सबमिट किया कि इतनी माइन्स इस एरिया में इल्लिगल चल रही है ? यदि आपको इन्फार्मेशन सबमिट किया तो आपने उसके ऊपर क्या एक्शन लिया और इस माइन में जहां कि 8 आदमी मर चुके है पहली मार्च को, उस घटना के तीन दिन बाद यह इंसीडेंट हुआ उसके बारे में क्या इन्फार्मेशन आप के पास आई और इसके लिए क्या प्रिवेंटिव मेजर्स आप देने की व्यवस्था कर रहे हैं ?

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: I am only concerned with this accident. If it is about some other incident, I require notice.

SHRI NARSINGH NARAIN PANDEY: I also asked whether the State Government has furnished any

information to the Central Government about these illegal minings and what preventive measures have so far been taken to prevent such illegal minings?

SHRI DAMADAR PANDEY: On a point of order, Sir. Death of 5 persons or more in any mine is considered to be a disaster. It is a very important matter. How is it that when more than 8 dead bodies have been recovered, the Minister is not having knowledge of it and is saying that he wants separate notice?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप बीच में कैसे आ गए ? प्वाइंट ऑफ आर्डर तो अवेश्वन अवर में एलाऊ नहीं होता है ।

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: If the hon. member had given some indication to me in the morning, I would have come with some information about the other incident also. As soon as I go back, I will find out if any information is available and pass it on to him if it is available. With regard to illegal mining, the Director-General of Mines Safety informed the State Government and has also drawn the attention of the concerned Ministries. Labour Ministry is not directly concerned with illegal mining. On a report dated 30th September 1974 from the Director General of Mines Safety about unauthorised and illegal mining on a large scale that was going on in different areas, the matter was brought to the notice of the Department of Coal on 15-10-74. The Department was reminded subsequently on 10-12-74, 10-1-75 and 22-2-75. We have been reminding the concerned authorities and the State Government was asked to look into this matter. If any information is available, I will supply it to the hon. member.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मन्त्री जी कबूल कर रहे हैं कि मिले कोलियरी में जो घटना हुई उसमें 6 आदमी मर गए ।

लेकिन मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि बिहार के झखबार इण्डियन नेशन का कहना है कि 40 आदमी मरे हैं और दूसरी खान में जो दुर्घटना हुई उसमें अभी आप ने सुना कि 8 मजदूर मर गए... (व्यवधान)... आठ को लाशें मिल चुकी हैं, अभी मलबा हटाया जा रहा है, न मालूम और कितने मरे होंगे। तो मैं यह ज्ञातना चाहता हूँ कि क्या सरकार को इस बात की जानकारी है कि बिहार के अन्दर गैर-कानूनी खानें कितनी चल रही हैं और उन खानों में काम करने वाले मजदूरों की संख्या कितनी है ?

क्या यह बात सच है कि जितनी भी गैर-कानूनी खानें हैं, जिनका कोई मतलब सरकार से नहीं है, उन खानों में काम करने वाले मजदूरों को राष्ट्रीयकृत खानों के मजदूरों के बराबर मजदूरी नहीं दी जाती है तथा उनके लिये दूसरी कोई सहायिका भी उपलब्ध नहीं है अगर यह बात सही है तो उन मजदूरों के हकों की हिफाजत करने के लिये सरकार ने कौनसी कार्यवाही की है और उसके क्या नतीजे निकले हैं ? क्योंकि मेरी जानकारी है कि हजारों मजदूर आप वहां दो रुपये और एक रुपये रोज पर काम कर रहे हैं तथा उनकी सर्विस कंडीशन भी बहुत खराब है। खान चलाए की जो व्यवस्था है, वह गलत है, कानून के मुताबिक नहीं है। इसी वजह से इस तरह की घटनाएँ हो रही हैं। भविष्य में ऐसी घटनाएँ न हों और मजदूरों के हकों की हिफाजत की जाय—इसके लिये आपने कौनसी कार्यवाही की है ?

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY.
The question is one of illegal mining, not legal mining. If the hon. Members want me to regulate all mines, legal and illegal, no legislation could do that. To prevent illegal mining certain action could be taken. For that purpose, I have already said what could be done. I had written to the concerned department and also to the State Government. Under the Mines Act we

contemplate appointing a court of inquiry. We shall examine not merely the particular accident but also the question of illegal mining.

SHRI RAMAVATAR SHASTRI:
What about the workers in such collieries? How are you safeguarding their rights? Thousands of workers are there in mines spread all over the State.

MR. SPEAKER: They should not work in illegal mines.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY:
I may respectfully submit one point

MR. SPEAKER: The question is about workers working in the illegal mines. If you are not reddy for this, you may examine it.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY
How are we to protect the workers engaged in the illegal mines? That is the question, if I understood him correctly. The question of illegal mining has to be gone into in depth because it is not a question of legal mining. That is why we said that we are appointing a court of enquiry not merely to go into the question of this particular accident but also to examine the question of illegal mining and to see what preventive steps could be taken, in spite of the illegality of the mining.

SHRI RAMAVATAR SHASTRI:
What measures are the Government taking to safeguard the rights of the workers who are working in the illegal mines? They are not paid their wages and salaries.

DR KAILAS: It is very unfortunate. The hon. Minister says that the Director of Safety had informed the State Government that illegal mining is going on there. Is it not the moral responsibility of the Central Government and the officer concerned with safety, whether it is legal or illegal, to protect the lives

of those persons who are being exploited by persons who bribe the officers. The Minister answers here that he is expected to only inform the State Government and he is not thinking of appointing a court of enquiry. That is all understandable. I want to ask him whether it is the moral responsibility of the Central Government, especially the Labour Minister to protect the lives of persons who are working in mines legal or illegal. He should have acted promptly when it came to his notice. He is replying the same way, repeatedly. He does not understand. He is morally responsible for the protection of the life of the workers for which he has been appointed as Labour Minister.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY:

I do not want to go into the question why I have appointed as the Labour Minister. That is not for me to answer.

DR. KAILAS: It is not for the person I am talking of. I never said so. A Labour Minister at the Centre is more responsible to look after the interests of labour. You cannot take protection under the word "illegal mining". (Interruptions) I know his heart bleeds for the workers. But he is not replying to that and take, my remarks as personal, which is again an unfortunate reply.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY:

I would respectfully submit to the House, through you, Sir, that accidents take place not only in the illegally-worked mines but also in legally-worked mines. This is a case of illegally-worked mines. That the mines have been working illegally, has been brought to the notice of the authorities concerned. The Director-General of Mines (Safety) has no power to stop illegal mining. No notice is given to him that on a particular day a particular mine is going to be worked illegally. a particular excavation is going to be done, particular coal is going to be

removed and all that. But, in this case, discharging the full responsibility, as soon as the matter came to the knowledge of the Director-General of Mines Safety, the authorities concerned rushed to the spot and took necessary steps to prevent further damage. That is why they saved further damage to the mines.

As far as the general question about illegal mining is concerned, as to what action will have to be taken, I cannot immediately say because in the very nature of it, how to deal with illegally-worked mines, is a matter to be dealt with by the authorities concerned. That is why I have gone a step further saying that we are considering the question of appointing a court of inquiry and we are considering whether such a reference can be made to it. These are the steps we have taken.

Whether it is illegally or legally worked mines, we are certainly concerned with the welfare of human beings. If a proper notice is given about an accident taking place in an illegally-worked mines on a particular day, that the accident is taking place, steps could be taken to prevent the accident.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE: If such a court of inquiry is likely to be set up to go into the whole question, I welcome that.

My information is that on the particular day when the accident took place, the attendance Register was changed. They keep an Attendance Register. Generally, after the accident, the wives and children of the persons who are dead come and check from the Attendance Register whether they attended the mine on that day or not. In this particular case, to hide the dead bodies, to lessen the number of persons who died, they changed the Attendance Register. May I know whether this matter will also be referred to the court of inquiry so that the real

number of those persons who died, those who attended the mine but did not return to their homes, is correctly assessed?

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: In the case of illegally-worked mines, I do not know whether the Attendance Registers are maintained by them. Anyway, I hope, this aspect also will be kept in mind and further investigation will be done.

Our information is that as soon as the accident had taken place, the villagers had removed the dead bodies. As to how many persons had been working, who were the persons who were working and who actually died, how many dead bodies had been removed by them is still not known. The police are investigating the matter. As far as our information is concerned, so far six bodies have been recovered and three injured have been removed from the debris. The police are still investigating. If any information is provided, I would consider it to be my privilege, honour and duty to come before the House and inform the House about it.

SHRI DAMODAR PANDEY: The Director-General of Mines (Safety) was very much there, day before yesterday, in the mine. How is it that you do not have the information. He was very much on the spot. I was myself present there.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD: It is very good, and I appreciate it, that the hon. Minister is setting up the court of inquiry for this accident. But how is it, when the accident has taken place and eight persons are already dead—the number of dead persons might be more—what steps the Government from including this one also in the court of inquiry? How is it that eight persons are dead? There may be more in the debris. How is it that Government has not been informed about it? Government is moving in such a

snail's pace that they do not have full information on this. If they know then what is the objection of the Government to include this one also in the Court of Inquiry?

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: As I said, we are awaiting a proper report on this. As soon as I go back to office, I will check up whether the report has come. We got some cryptic message, but a proper report must come. Certainly the suggestion made by the hon. Member be treated with utmost respect.

SHRI AMRIT NAHATA: Is it a fact that there is a provision in the Mines Safety Act that, if there is a fatal accident anywhere, the management must immediately inform the mine safety authorities? In this particular case, did the Management inform the mines safety authorities about the accident? If not, here at least is a clear violation of the law. Will Government prosecute the management for this violation? The Court of Inquiry will go into larger questions. will take its own time. But, here, obviously, there has been a blatant violation of the mine safety regulations. Why should the Management not be prosecuted for this violation?

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: As I said, this is a case of illegal mining. In the case of illegal mining, nobody is likely to report about what had happened.

AN HON. MEMBER: It amounts to murder.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: It amounts to many crimes under the Indian Penal Code. I am not saying that no offence has been committed. We are trying to initiate proceedings under the Mines Act. But the question is who is the real owner, who is behind it. This will have to be discovered first.