

Fire in the unit of ECIL

579. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

SHRI O.T. LEPCHA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there was a major fire in the thermal battery making unit of ECIL in Kushaiguda, Hyderabad;

(b) if so, the extent of damage caused to the life and property;

(c) the reasons of the fire;

(d) whether it is also a fact that there was a blast in the unit before fire;

(e) if so, the details therefor; and

(f) the efforts made to prevent it in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN):

(a) Yes, Sir. There was a fire accident in the Thermal battery unit at ECIL's factory at Hyderabad on 19th June 2009.

(b) Ten persons sustained burn injuries and one person had inhalation injuries. Four of them succumbed to burn injuries while undergoing treatment in the hospital on 19th, 27th, 29th June and 5th July 2009. Of the remaining seven persons, one of them is in critical condition, four persons are reported to be stable and two persons have been discharged.

The initial estimate of raw material destroyed in fire is about Rs.22 lakh. Some machinery in the pyroheater section of the Thermal Battery Unit was damaged in the fire. The extent of damage and restoration cost will be assessed after the completion of investigations and premises are opened.

(c) The thermal batteries use pyrotechnic heater. The scrap generated during the manufacturing process of this pyroheater is accumulated over a period of time and burnt under controlled conditions periodically. Immediate investigations by the Accident Investigation Committee have revealed that the fire originated while burning the scrap in a pit outside the facility building under the supervision of Safety Officer. While adding scrap to the fire, sudden spurt occurred in the fire and a burning mass fell on the nearby scrap meant for subsequent burning. Splinters fell on the persons causing burn injuries. Fire and splinters also entered the nearby pyroheater section through the window. Fire spread through the room igniting available combustible materials, this fire caused burn injuries to the personnel working in the room.

(d) No, Sir. There was no blast prior to the fire. However, explosive sound was heard and splinters flew which is attributed to the sudden evolution of oxy-hydrogen due to ingress of water.

(e) Not applicable

(f) The recommendations of the Accident Investigation Committee has been submitted to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board which is the Competent Authority for enforcing safety. Their recommendations will be complied with.