

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI DHANIK LAL MANDAL): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Effect of Workers' Strike at Gomia Explosives Limited on the Functioning of Coal Mines

237. SHRI RAMANAND YADAV: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recent protracted strike of workers of the Gomia Explosive Ltd. had adversely affected the working of the coal mines of the National Coal Development Corporation, the Bharat Coking Coal Ltd. and the Coal India Ltd.; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The loss of coal production during this period is approximately one million tonnes.

Shifting of the Office of the Eastern Zone Electricity Board from Patna to Calcutta

238. SHRI RAMANAND YADAV: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to shift the office of the Eastern Regional Electricity Board from Patna to Calcutta; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons there-for?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b). The suggestion is under examination.

Political Prisoners in Jails in the Country

239. SHRIMATI AMARJIT KAUR:
SHRI SWAMI DINESH
CHANDRA:
SHRI NRIPATI RANJAN
CHOUDHURY:
SHRIMATI LEELA DAMODARA
MENON:
SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of political prisoners still in jails in each State;

(b) the number out of them, who have been convicted by courts; and

(c) whether government have taken any decision for the release of the res' of them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI DHANIK LAL MANDAL): (a) to (c) The term 'political prisoner' is not defined under law and, therefore it is not possible to collect precise information in this regard. Government have taken all steps to see that all persons who were either kept under preventive detention or had been prosecuted/convicted for acts directly related to their political beliefs or political activities, should be immediately released. A statement issued to the Press by the Home Minister on 24th August, 1977, explaining Government's policy in this regard, is enclosed.

PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Government's commitment to repeal MISA is absolutely and unconditionally

Home Minister's Clarification about Political Prisoners in Jail

New Delhi, Bhadra 2, 1899
August 24, 1977

The Home Minister, Shri Charan Singh, has reiterated the Janata Government's firm commitment to repeal

MISA and said that this is absolute and unconditional.

In a statement issued here today, the Home Minister has said: —

"I have been reading with a sense of dismay reports in the Press alleging that thousands of political prisoners were still languishing in jails in various parts of the country. These reports or statements, though not politically motivated, create an impression in the public mind that the Janata Government or Ministry of Home Affairs was dragging its feet on the election promises made by the Janata Party in this regard. I deem it my duty, therefore, to place the facts before the people to set at rest all misgivings on this subject.

As soon as the new Government took office, it decided that all persons who were either kept under preventive detention or were being prosecuted or were convicted for acts directly relatable to their political beliefs or political activities, should be immediately released. During the Emergency, several organisations were banned and many persons were detained merely on the ground that they belonged to banned organisations. Many others were prosecuted and convicted on the ground that they indulged in activities in furtherance of the objectives of the banned organisations. Instructions had been issued for the release of all such persons. To the best of my knowledge, I have not come across a single instance of any complaint that any such person continues to be in custody now.

NAXALITES

The problem of Naxalites had also engaged our immediate attention. We issued instructions to all States that all Naxalite detenus should be immediately and unconditionally set free. Out of 645 Naxalite detenus when the new Government assumed office, all but four, who are in Tamil Nadu, had been released by the end of May.

Even in regard to other Naxalite prisoners, we have done more than any other Government in the past was able or willing to do. In as much as

the crimes committed by the Naxalites were not actuated by any personal considerations, we wanted to bring them into the political mainstream if they could only be weaned away from the path of violence which they had adopted. With this end in view, a dialogue was initiated with some of their leaders and all the State Governments were advised to release even those Naxalite prisoners who were charged with or convicted of serious offences but had spent five years in jail whether as under-trials or as convicts and gave an indication of a desire to *abjure* violence even in future. It is in pursuance of our suggestions that releases of such prisoners have been made in States like West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Punjab. If the progress in this direction is not as spectacular, however, as one would wish, the constitutional and other legal constraints are appreciated before the Central Government is held to any blame. If any of the State Governments like Andhra Pradesh who are entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining law and order in their jurisdictions, are apprehensive regarding those who are charged with or convicted of serious offences and yet refuse to give any indication of any desire to *abjure* violence in future, we cannot possibly blame them. Nor can we, under the Constitution, force them to act against their wishes?

MISA DETENUS

As for detention under MISA there were 6,847 detenus under MISA on 25th March, 1977. I had clearly stated on the floor of both the Houses of Parliament in the first week of April, 1977, that we were advising the State Governments 'to release all those still under detention except where interests of security of the country are clearly involved or where persons have been detained on account of their recent indulgence in violent activities.' As a result of these efforts, the number of detenus on 13th August, 1977 came down to 592, out of whom, 509 are foreigners awaiting repatriation to the country of their origin or suspected of espionage. Out of the remaining

83 Indian nationals in detention including the 4 Naxalites in Tamil Nadu 33 are spies, 19 are insurgents in the North-Eastern region and 6 are persons having extra-territorial loyalties. The remaining 21 persons are anti-social elements and hardened criminals detained in various States in connection with the maintenance of public order.

I may add that our commitment to repeal the MISA is absolute and unconditional. If it has not yet been struck off the statute-book, it is because an examination of the proposals for strengthening of other laws and consequential matters, as promised in the President's Address, has not yet been completed.

I hope the above facts will allay all doubts and misgivings if any, are at all entertained—in public mind about our policies and will put an end to misinformed criticism of the Government on the subject of release of political prisoners."

Setting up of a North-Eastern Regional Power Grid

240. SHRI NRIPATI RANJAN CHOUDHURY: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to set up a North. Eastern Regional Power Grid covering all the States and Union territories in the region; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A North-Eastern Regional Electricity Board has been set up for integrated operation in the North Eastern Region. Operational schedules are prepared after reviewing the present generation, load demand, etc. forecasting the future load demand and availability of power in each State/Union Territory in the Region.

Load generation balance studies are conducted after reviewing the progress of power projects in the Region etc. A Regional Load Despatch Centre is also being set up at Shillong to coordinate the activities of the constituent units and to monitor the day-to-day operations in the Region.

Ban on grant of licences to small scale cottage industries for manufacture of tin containers

241. SHRI SUJAN SINGH: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether 'Government have imposed any ban on the grant of licences to small scale cottage industries for the manufacture of tin containers; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (KUMARI ABHAMAITI): (a) Yes, Sir. The ban has, however, been relaxed for setting up new units in backward and RIP areas for rapid industrialisation of these areas.

(b) The ban has been imposed mainly due to excess capacity and partly due to shortage of raw-material.

Incidents of Communal Disturbances in the country

242. SHRI JAGDISH JOSHI:
SHRI IBRAHIM KALANIYA:
SHRI PIARE LALL KUREEL
URF PIARE LALL TALIB: SHRI
KHURSHED ALAM KHAN:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some incidents of Communal disturbances have taken place in different parts of the country during the last six months; and