

RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 27th July, 1978/the 5th
Sraavana, 1900 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the
clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Thefts in the Bombay Port ..

*241. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Will
the Minister of SHIPPING AND
TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's atten-
tion has been drawn to a news item
appearing in the 'Sunday Standard',
Bombay of the 18th June, 1978 under
the caption "Thieving in Dock" re-
garding organised theft of imported
goods in the Bombay port;

(b) if so, what are the details in
this regard; and

(c) what action Government pro-
pose to take to prevent such thefts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF
SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI
CHAND RAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A copy of the news item is
placed on the Table of the House.

(c) The Chief Vigilance Officer,
Bombay Port Trust, had already writ-
ten to the author of the news item
to assist him in the investigations but
there has been no response till 24
July, 1978.

Security and prevention of thefts
are the joint responsibility of the
Police and the Port authorities. Suit-
able measures are always taken by
the Port Authorities to prevent thefts
from the Bombay Dock Yards. These
are part of a continuing process and
measures to improve the position are
taken from time to time.

NEWS ITEM

Thieving in the Dock

By Raja Chandran

Sunday Standard,

Bombay, June 18, 1978

Dock workers call her "Kayamchi
Garodar Bai", the permanently pre-
gnant woman. For 24 years she has
been pregnant and her "special de-
livery" consists of stolen articles worth
thousands of rupees.

Without the slightest hesitation, the
middle-aged woman walks past the
security at the Yellow Gate who let
her out without hesitation, too.

All eyes are on her the moment she
comes out of the docks. Her every
step is watched from the clutter of
shops as well as the high-rise build-
ings nearby.

For the ordinary passer-by, the
sight of this 50-year-old pregnant
woman may present a curious specta-
cle, nothing more. But for some
scores of men watching with hidden
eyes, her ambling walk to Goa street
ten minutes away is a viable business
proposition.

This correspondent who smuggled
himself into the dock and later follow-
ed her on her seemingly pointless
journey was struck by the calculated-
ness of the entire operation.

At Goa Street she paused and stop-
ped at a shop. The pot-bellied shop-
keeper did not bat an eyelid as she
dug her hand deep inside her saree
and took out a bundle. She placed it
neatly beside an assortment of other
electronic gadgets spilled allaround.

For the woman, delivering the goods
meant her role was over. Soon agents
and other "shylocks" in the booming
"dock thieving syndicate" will hawk
the wares for a fantastic fee.

The "Garodar Bai" is just one of the
countless carriers who have made
stealing a noble profession. She has
five helpers who too are women.
Though not always pregnant they are
"able" to carry stolen articles out of
the dock with the greatest of ease.

Police, Customs and various en-
forcement authorities, paid to check

thieving, actually encourage it. There are no questions asked and watching these carriers flit in and out the dock gives the impression that they possess permanent passes.

A visit to the dock not only confirmed official connivance but also revealed the existence of several "thieving syndicates" which ensure that goods supposedly in the safe custody of the authorities are pilfered with masterly efficiency.

A 12-foot high wall, seemingly impregnable, encloses the dock area. The broken glass pieces atop and the wired fencing only fool the gullible. The massive Customs baggage counter is just four yards from the wall.

And yet, this spot is reportedly a heaven for dock thieves. The wall is scaled by thieves with tremendous ease and the goods thrown over the wall into waiting vans below.

This section of the wall has become so used to the contraband carriers that tell-tale marks are visible on close examination leading right upto the fence. Even the fence tilts towards the lane below as if a symbol of defeat.

Another exit point is a lane where there is a Port Trust security chowkie. Here, straight pay-offs and outs ensure quick passage of the stolen goods for which according to insiders "strict security" is provided by the security officers themselves. Often a taxi cruises along screenches to a halt at the chowkie and discharges the goods to be picked up by carriers who are often in tattered clothes. The quantity discharged may be small but the activity is large.

At the Blue Gate on D'Mello Road in front of the Dental College, it is "open sesame," for urchins and lepers who infest the area. They keep making regular forays into the dock after greasing the palms of security men.

A sleepy-eyed policeman became instantly alert when he saw a five-year-

old girl trying to gain entry. This correspondent watching the "operation" a few yards away, saw the cop go back to his sleep moments after the girl handed him some coins.

She went inside the dark pedestrian corridor and returned minutes later with milk cans. She ran and gave the cans to a couple of youths sitting under a tree. She was amply rewarded with currency notes.

The Blue Gate, insiders say, is ideal for quickly-disposable goods and the main carriers here are urchins and lepers who are the cops' best friends in the docks and their worst enemies when drives against them are launched.

No one knows how many lakhs worth of property are pilfered from the dock despite the Government setting up an elaborate system of four independent security agencies. The Vigilance Officer is a Deputy Inspector-General of Police. There is the Deputy Commissioner of Police who with his staff controls the Yellow Gate. Then there is the Chief Security Officer with the rank of Assistant Commissioner with his men, besides separate dock security watchmen who are controlled by various sections.

Not all these agencies are totally corrupt. Talking to some officials, this Correspondent was surprised to find an open admission of large-scale thieving.

Asked what the security agencies were doing, they said there were "inadequate transport facilities" and also that the telephones went out of order "now and again". But an engineer who has been watching these "shoddy goings on" for years asked: "Why do they want transport and phones? A man with two feet can prevent thieving".

From what insiders disclose, the dock thieves are so well-organised that during big operations, all the phones in sensitive areas go dead.

Many insiders are scared to talk about the ramifications of the "syndicates". They hint that some kind of official patronage from the "very top" is always there.

Rumours abound the docks which has become the breeding ground of Haji Mastans. One of them tends to suggest that a new syndicate may soon find an exclusive way to smuggle out goods—through a tunnel which starts in the Mobile Crane Section and ends up nearby hospital. In olden times, it was reportedly one of Shivaji's exit routes and now the Great Maratha warrior must be turning in his grave!

Whenever there is a theft of Bombay Port Trust property, a complaint is promptly lodged with the Yellow Gate Police. But in the event of theft of private property from the ships, not always a complaint is lodged by the party concerned.

The Yellow Gate Police to whom this correspondent talked to plead ignorance to the number of private cases pending with them. According to the insiders, recently in an export consignment of tractors it was detected that some electrical accessories worth Rs. 20,000 were stolen.

The exporting party was diffident about lodging a complaint as the consignment would be delayed for investigation. There are reportedly many racketeers who take advantage of this diffidence. Reliable sources said there are still many who exploit import consignment which are under-invoiced.

"We are thoroughly demoralised", lamented a dock worker who has seen thieving and smuggling taking place so brazenly for years. "Though negligible compared to the total turnover at the dock, labour productivity is going down", he said.

Why doesn't the labour protest? I asked. Many quoted blood-curdling stories of ruthlessness. The most re-

cent "disappearance" making the rounds is that of a technical supervisor who had complained to the police about these nefarious activities. He has not been heard of since and his family at Tirpav near Chembur has all but given up hope.

A knowledgeable insider echoing the fears of many disclosed: "When money does not buy silence, death is the inevitable outcome."

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Sir, the particular news item which the hon. Minister has laid on the Table contains such things that it is a matter which requires serious attention.

Mr. Chairman, I will read out only two or three things. The first item is this:

"Dock workers call her 'Kayamchi Garodar Bai', the permanently pregnant woman. For 24 years she has been pregnant and her 'special delivery' consists of stolen articles worth thousands of rupees."

This is known to all the officers who watch everything. The three agencies involved are the Customs, the Port Trust and the Bombay City Police.

A much more serious thing is this. This correspondent went and spent a day in the docks. This is what he has reported:

"There is a calculatedness in the entire operation. There are countless carriers who have made stealing a noble profession.

"Police, Customs and various enforcement authorities, paid to check thieving, actually encourage it. There are no questions asked and watching these carriers flit in and out, the dock gives the impression that they possess permanent passes. He says that 'there are thieving syndicates' and goes on to say—

"...straight pay-offs and cuts ensure quick passage of the stolen goods for which strict security is provided by the security officers themselves."

Sir, I would like to mention one or two more points to which the Minister might give specific answers. One is that there are some syndicates for which some kind of official patronage from the very top is always there.

The report goes on—

“We are thoroughly demoralised”, lamented a dock worker who has seen thieving and smuggling taking place so brazenly for years.

“Why does not the labour protest?” I asked. Many quoted blood-curdling stories of ruthlessness.”

The last point is about the most recent disappearance of a technical supervisor who had the check to complain about these activities; he has disappeared and has not been found.

In the context of these revelations, merely appointing Vigilance Officers and saying that they are keeping a continuous watch, etc. I do not think is the answer. Is the hon. Minister going to make any specific attempt to find out which are the syndicates, who are protecting them and what is the pay-off and how is he going to solve this problem in a drastic manner?

SHRI CHAND RAM: I do realise that the contents of this news item are very serious but often there have been various kinds of action taken. Some steps are taken by the Bombay Port Trust. For example, surprise checks are being carried out. And the BFT has also established special magistrate courts. An Anti-Pilferage Committee has also been set up. As a matter of abundant caution, lock-fasts are provided at all the transit sheds and warehouses for the storage of valuable cargo. For preventing thefts of cargoes by hired women and to prevent the entry of women, a special women police wing also exists at the port.

Apart from these, I have also ordered strong action to be taken against the Chief Security Officer. And I have also suggested to the Bombay Port Trust Chairman that

he can suspend the Chief Security Officer and also take other kinds of strong action, if found necessary.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Would the hon. Minister state whether there is a closer liaison established with the Maharashtra Police for getting their help in this thing? Has he got figures of the reported and unreported amount of goods stolen every day every month?

SHRI CHAND RAM: I have got some figures for the last five years. They run into 63 lakhs of rupees and out of this, 69 per cent has been recovered. Action has been taken against the erring employees. Some 65 employees were under suspension out of which 17 have been dismissed.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI: Sir, what the hon. Minister is stating here might be due to ignorance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is not a supplementary. Ask a question.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI: I was told by the small scale industries organisation that their goods were not being exported. I had the occasion of visiting the Port Trust incognito. It took me four hours to move about half the area. What I want to tell you is that you are trying to apply the ointment when an operation is necessary. There are permanent people who go to jail because they have made it their business to go to jail and to come out of jail. It is a syndicate as rightly pointed out by Mr. Shah. Anything from chiffon sarees to other costly items can be taken away. That is why I said at the outset that it might be due to ignorance that you are stating this. Your officers might have given you this information. Well an operation is necessary for this purpose. My suggestion is that you appoint some military personnel for one year, find out how much you recover and then take the next step. Otherwise, this can-

not be done. It is an empire of smugglers, killers and what not. They are in collusion with the officers and inspectors.

SHRI CHAND RAM: Sir, in fact, he has suggested certain measures to be taken. I can assure the hon. Member that we are thinking of appointing Industrial Security Force in place of State Police as well as Port Trust Security Officers.

श्री प्रेम मनोहर : श्रीमन्, मैं मन्त्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि गोदी में जो चोरी होती है, उसका आपको 1/10 भी पता नहीं है। जो सामान दूसरे देशों से लूज हालत में आता है, हिन्दुस्तान में, उस सब की डिलीवरी डाक्स पर हो जाती है और वहाँ जो इंडेंटिंग एजेण्ट्स हैं वह सब मिल कर बैगनस पर दो-दो, तीन-तीन टन कम माल लादते हैं। जैसा कि श्री वीरेन शाह जी ने कहा है कि वहाँ पूरा क्लिक बना हुआ है और इसलिये वहाँ की चोरी की सूचना आपके पास तक नहीं आ पाती। जो डिलीवरी डाक्स पर है वह एक्स-डाक्स है, उसका भी कोई निर्वह नहीं हो रहा है। लाखों रुपये की चोरी महीने में यहाँ डाक्स पर हो रही है। तो क्या मन्त्री महोदय ऐसी व्यवस्था का निर्माण करेंगे कि जिस सामान की डिलीवरी डाक्स पर की जाती है, लूज कन्डीशन में जैसे सल्फर फास्फेट राक्स और जो दूसरे सामान हैं उसमें चोरी न हो। जब यह माल बैगनों में लादा जाता है तो हर बैगन में दो-दो तीन-तीन टन कम माल लादा जाता है और वह सब माल चोरी होकर बम्बई के बाजारों में चला जाता है। तो क्या मन्त्री महोदय ऐसी व्यवस्था करेंगे जिसमें कि चोरी में कमी हो और इसे रोका जा सके।

श्री चांद राम : माननीय सदस्य ने जो कहा कि ऐसा होता है मैं उसकी जांच करने के लिए तैयार हूँ और कराऊंगा लेकिन वैसे सन् 1973 में जो आफेंसिबल बाम्बे पुलिस एक्ट के मातहत रजिस्टर्ड हुए हैं उनकी संख्या 2118 है, सन् 1974 में 2956 हुए, सन् 1975 में 3872 हुए, सन् 1976 में 4455 हुए और

1977 में 5547 हुए। यह चाहे प्राइवेट प्रापर्टी हो या पब्लिक प्रापर्टी हो जो थैफ्ट के केसेज हैं वे रजिस्टर्ड होते हैं। अगर कहीं कमी भी हो जाती है तो भी बाम्बे पुलिस एक्ट के मातहत केस रजिस्टर्ड होते हैं। उन का बाकायदा इन्श्योरेंस कम्पनीज से क्लेम भी लिया जाता है।

SHRI KHURSHED ALAM KHAN: Sir, I may remind the hon. Minister for Shipping and Transport that last year he had gone on an extensive tour of foreign countries to study the working of ports and many other allied matters. May, I know, with his enhanced knowledge of the working with which he has come back, what arrangements he has made to prevent such happenings? Is it a fact that these thefts are a regular feature of the Bombay Port, not only of the Bombay Port but other ports also? Besides, I would like to know what amount of compensation was paid during the last three years in respect of consignments which were lost or which were reportedly removed from the premises or custody of the Bombay Port Trust.

SHRI CHAND RAM: Sir, the Bombay Port Trust does not pay any compensation. It is just a bailee. The compensation is paid by the insurance company. As I have just assured the hon. House, we are thinking of appointing or substituting in the place of the Bombay Port security staff as well as the State Police, the Industrial Security Force staff. I think when we appoint that Force, things will improve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you brought any particular information after your study abroad? That is what he wants to know.

SHRI CHAND RAM: Sir, that pertains to the easy handling of the cargo and other allied matters.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: Question No. 264 may also be taken along with Question 242.

MR. CHAIRMAN All right. They relate to the same subject.

Management of large industrial houses

*242. SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI: †
SHRIMATI LEELA DAMODARA MENON:
SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA:
PROF. D. P. CHATTO-PADHYAYA:
SHRIMATI USHI KHAN:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently taken a decision to evolve a scheme for breaking family hold on management in large industrial houses;

(b) if so, what are the salient features of the scheme; and

(c) what are the names of the industrial houses which will be covered under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and c) Do not arise.

Growth of large business houses

*264. SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: ‡
SHRIMATI LEELA DAMODARA MENON:
SHRI SAWAISINGH SISODIA:
SHRI PRAKASH MEHROTRA:
SHRIMATI HAMIDA HABI-BULLAH:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any fresh measures to curtail the growth of large business houses,

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Arvind Ganesh Kulkarni.

‡The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Gurudev Gupta.

with a view to encouraging small entrepreneurs and widening the scope of the public sector; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Apart from the restrictions and the curbs to regulate the growth of large houses as already provided in the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 and the criteria being followed in dealing with the proposals from large houses for expansion/establishment of new undertakings under the aforesaid Act, the 'Statement on Industrial Policy' laid before the Parliament on 23rd December, 1977 spells out the further measures undertaken by the Government in relation to growth of large houses as also to promote the small scale and tiny sectors and to expand the role of the public sector. Government are also considering further steps to be taken on these issues to bring about the desired results.

The High Powered Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Justice Rajinder Sachar is also reviewing the Companies Act, 1956 and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 and their report is expected to be submitted to Government before the end of August, 1978.

Further steps on these issues, which will involve amendment of the Companies Act, 1956 and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 can be taken only after all the issues involved have been examined and the Report of the Justice Sachar Committee is received by the Government.

SHRI ARVIND GANESH KULKARNI: What is the reply to Question No. 242?