

[Shri Venkat Swamy]

of the Ministry of Supply and Rehabilitation (Department of Rehabilitation) Notification G.S.R. No. 394, dated the 13th March, 1976, publishing the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Amendment Rules, 1976, [Placed in Library. See No. LT—10619/76]

Annual Accounts (1971-72 and 1972-73) of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi and Related Papers

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING (SHRI A. K. M. ISHAQUE): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table, under subsection (4) of section 18 of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences Act, 1956, a copy each (in English and Hindi) of the following papers :—

- (i) Certified Annual Accounts of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, for the year 1971-72 and the Audit Report (hereon.
- (ii) Certified Annual Accounts of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, for the year 1972-73 and the Audit Report thereon. {Placed in Library. For (i) and (ii) See No. LT— 10620/76].

Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (Department of Agriculture) Notification

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (SHRI PRABHUDAS PATEL): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table, under sub-section (6) of section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, a copy (in English and Hindi) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (Department of Agriculture) Notification G.S.R. No. 126 (E), dated the 16th March, 1976. [Placed in Library. See No. LT—10617/76]

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (1975-76)

SHRI V. B. RAJU (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Hundred and Ninety-seventh Report of the Public Accounts Committee (Fifth Lok Sabha) on 'Trade Fairs and Exhibitions'—Paragraph 47 of the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 1973-74, Union Government (Civil), relating to the Ministry of Commerce.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE WELFARE OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

SHRI BHAIYA RAM MUNDA (Bihar): Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Fifty-first Report of the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the Ministry of Home Affairs—Atrocities on Scheduled Castes in (i) Village Budhuchak (District Patna); and (ii) Village Amli Kaur (District Banda).

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Reported appeal by private Indian Shop-owners to their foreign counterparts to pay less wages to Indian Seamen and crew

SHRI NRIPATI RANJAN CHOUDHURY (Assam): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Shipping and Transport to the reported appeal by private Indian shipowners to their foreign counterparts in other countries to pay Indian seamen and crew in their employment less wages than paid to others and Government's reaction thereto.

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (DR. G. S. DHILLON): Mr. Chairman, Sir in its issue dated 25th March 1976 *Business Standard*, a Calcutta Daily, has alleged that—

(1) a section of private Indian Shipowners have addressed a confidential appeal to their foreign counterparts in other countries to pay Indian seamen in their employment less wages than paid to others;

(2) the appeal was made by the Owners Agents Committee which represents Indian Shipowners;

(3) under the Convention of International Labour Organisation all crew and seamen must be paid at least £48 a month. Indian Seamen crews on the other hand after a lapse of years are now being paid £32 a month.

We have verified the position from the Indian National Shipowners Association which represents Indian Shipowners. They have denied that any such appeal was made by any shipowner. The Owners Agents (Crew) Committee which represents foreign shipowners have also confirmed that they are not aware of any such appeal made by any shipowner. As such, there appears to be no substance in the allegation made in the news item in the *'Business Standard'*.

As regards the payment of minimum ILO recommended wage to Indian Seamen, it may be stated that the wages and other conditions of service of Indian seamen employed in foreign-going vessels are settled by the National Maritime Board which is a bipartite body of the shipowners and the seamen. The shipowners' representatives are nominated by the Calcutta Liner Conference (Crew) and the Owners/Agents Committee (Crews), Bombay, on behalf of the foreign shipowners and by the Indian National Shipowners Association on behalf of the Indian Shipowners. The Seafarers' representatives

are nominated by the National Union of Seafarers of India, Bombay, and the National Union of Seamen of India, Calcutta, the two unions recognised by the Shipping Industry and the Government.

The system of settling wage revision of seamen on foreign going ships through the National Maritime Board has functioned satisfactorily to the mutual advantage of both the shipowners and seafarers. The National Maritime Board Agreements are reviewed periodically and adjusted to suit changed conditions. In accordance with the latest Agreement effective from the 1st January 1976, the minimum wage has gone up from £36 to £44 approximately.

Attempts have been made in the past by the International Transport Workers Federation that Asian seamen should be paid the wage of £48 recommended by the Joint Maritime Commission of ILO in 1972. We have been resisting this demand on the ground that it would result in the reduction of the employment opportunities for Indian seamen and also adversely affect the competitive character of Indian shipping. In order to consider the matter in all its aspects, a national tripartite meeting consisting of the representatives of shipowners, seafarers and Government was held in July 1973, wherein it was agreed that the issue relating to wages should be settled on a bipartite basis between the seafarers and shipowners when all the implications, including those which are important in the national context, should be carefully examined and any decisions taken by mutual agreement would be implemented accordingly. It may be added that according to the Indian manning scales, more are required to be employed than under the manning scales of other companies.

In the light of these	guide-lines, an
understanding was reached	between Inter
national Transport Workers	Federation and
International Shipowners	Federation in

[Dr. G. S. Dhillon.] November, 1973 in accordance with which Indian Seamen employed on foreign ships are paid at the rate determined by the National Maritime Board of India and the difference between this wage and the ILO recommended minimum wage of £48 is credited to a Welfare Fund for Seamen which is administered by the Seafarers Welfare Fund Society. Out of the funds received by the Society as a result of this arrangement, a scheme of assistance to needy seamen when unemployed has already been introduced.

SHRI NRIPATI RANIAN CHOUDHURY : Sir, the allegation which is made in the paper, referred to by the hon. Minister, also says that the Indian seamen who are working in foreign ships are paid as much as £ 110 or more whereas in the Indian private ships they are paid only £ 32 or so and the Minister also has agreed with that. Now, when there are demands from the workers side for rationalisation of that wage structure for seamen, there is a possibility of the private shipowners making such requests to their foreign counterparts. The Minister has, through his Ministry, verified the position from the shipowners. Association and also from the Owners/Agents Committee. I would like to request the honourable Minister to institute an enquiry by an appropriate authority to find out the truth behind this allegation. This allegation is based on some facts because these points, as the Press report says, appeared in the Forward Seamen's Bulletin itself and it means that the Forward Seamen's Union is itself fighting on this issue. So, it needs the attention of the Government and I would request the honourable Minister to institute an inquiry into this by an appropriate authority to find out the truth and also to take action against the erring persons.

The other points that were raised by the Union are :

"The behaviour of the foreign ship-owners presents a refreshing contrast. For instance, in all modern foreign ships,

there is virtually no difference in the living conditions of the crew and others and this is also true of some Indian official vessels. But most private owners are still adopting the old type of discriminatory lodging arrangements for officers and crew. Owing to such wretched living conditions, the crew and the seamen have to face temperatures ranging between 20 °C in winter and 120°C in summer. Food allocation has been steadily reduced from 500 gms. of rice a day till a couple of years ago to 250 gms. now although the kind of work remains the same. Apart from first aid, there are no medical arrangements for ailing crew and seamen suffering from malnutrition and other diseases. As a result, many people have thrown themselves overboard or committed suicide in other ways or have gone insane". This is according to the Union's Secretary, Shri Ashutosh Banerjee.

Sir, this is a specific allegation made by the Union in its Bulletin and I would like to know from the honourable Minister whether fcis attention has been drawn to these points raised by the Union and, if so, what steps are being taken by the Ministry to see that these seamen and crew are able to work in congenial conditions in the ships for running these vessels in a better way. DR. G. S. DHILLON : Sir, regarding the suggestion of the honourable Member for an inquiry, we in our own way tried to contact the sources from which this information could be obtained and, as I have mentioned in my own statement, these are the sources which we contacted and from them we found that there is no basis for such a news. But I do feel that there might have been a clandestine sort of suggestion which it is very difficult at the present moment to know. But, about instituting a regular inquiry on that""basis, Sir, I can only assure the honourable Member that we will try to probe further into it and if we find even an inkling of some truth in it, which may be coming from the sources other than the ones that I have mentioned in my statement, I will certainly think over it.

SHRI NRIPATI RANJAN CHOU-DHURY: Why was the Forward Seamen's Union not contacted ?

DR. G. S. DHILLON : I have said that this is the demand not only from India but from all Asian countries. So far as our position is concerned, our standards, our national income, etc., are much below as compared to the Australians, the Americans or the British. We have to fix up their salaries and other emoluments according to our conditions. We cannot afford to pay them as high as they do. The decision taken by our Maritime Board has already been agreed to by the International Transport Workers Federation and also by the International Shipowners Federation. We started from £32, then it was 36 and not it is £. 44. The ILO recommended 48 and we pay the difference to the Seafarers Fund which is administered by the Seafarers Federation. We pay Rs. 10 daily to the unemployed seafarer from that, and at the same time we have fixed it up at Rs. 900. We are also planning to fix a pension out of that Fund—about Rs. 100 to the retiring sea-men.

As far as the other part of the hon. Members information is concerned, I think that he has just repeated what was given in the newspaper at the end as to what type of treatment our seafarers get on board foreign ships regarding their rations, living conditions and also medical facilities. I, too, got this information from that paper. Since this question was confined only to the difference between the international emoluments paid to the seafarers and our own. I confined myself also only to this information. This was a little a bit beyond the scope of the question. But, in my own way, I share this concern with him. I myself do not feel happy about this treatment, and I will try to enquire from all reliable sources, including the gentleman who is responsible for this news and also from the newspaper as to what are their sources, and whatever information we get, I shall be so happy to share it with the hon. Member. Thank you.

SHRI KALYAN ROY (West Bengal) : Sir, the Minister has raised two or three issues. There are other issues also involved in the Calling Attention Motion. I will ask clarification on those points.

First, he said that this may affect the employment opportunities. He said that the Indian shipowners have denied that any circular or any note has been sent to other shipowners. But is he aware that the Indian shipowners Association or the people who control the Indian shipping industry in the private sector are totally dominated by the Scindia Steam Navigation Co. and the India Steamship Co. Ltd; Calcutta, belonging to the Birlas. The Government of India has so far given Rs. 116 crores to the Indian shipowners as grant and loan, and whatever has been given has been monopolised by the Birlas and the Scindians who are taking as much as Rs. 30 crores as ship-building assistance. The Government which is so friendly and generous to the private sector in the shipping industry should also collect the facts about their living conditions. The difference is very glaring. If anybody boards an Indian ship, he will notice the difference between the crew and the officers and between a deckman and a worker working in the Engineering Department. This difference is not there in any other shipping concern or ship.

The second point is, as he has mentioned, about the question of recruitment. This question has come up again and again in this very House. On 22nd March, 1972, the then Minister of Shipping and Transport, Shri Raj Bahadur, stated :

"The manning scale for the seamen for different classes of ships under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, has not so far been prescribed."

In other words, it is left absolutely to the whims of the shipowners to decide the manning and the unions or the workers have no voice. As a matter of fact, if you analyse the workload on the Indian crew and seamen, it is much more as compared to foreign ships. It is also unfortunate that the recruitment is consistently declining and

[Shri Kalyan Roy] this has resulted in great discontentment. It is further noted that the recruitment in Calcutta is consistently going down. It was agreed, whether the Minister is aware or not, that the ratio of recruitment between Bombay and Calcutta will be 70:30. But it has not been honoured at all. On the 8th of May, 1974, the Minister agreed that the recruitment was being made mainly in Bombay. He has given the figures in 1973, 23,331 seamen were recruited from Bombay where 11,077 were recruited from Calcutta. As you know, Calcutta is a recruiting centre for the entire eastern India. In Calcutta, there are people who are highly skilled. Why is there this discrimination ? Why the ratio of 70:30 which was agreed has not been honoured so far ? Why is there discrimination in relation to the standard of living ? What steps are the Government going to take to enforce the proportionate recruitment in Calcutta which is declining every year ?

Lastly, regarding the other conditions, the Minister seems to give the impression that the job of the seamen is permanent. Is it not a fact that a seaman is able to work hardly two or three months in a year ? It is not a permanent job and most of the time he is unemployed. He has to wait in a queue to get a job in any other ship. He feels insecure because of this temporary nature of the job. This pension of Rs. 100 does not solve the problem. In view of these uncertainties, in view of the massive loan you are giving to the Indian shipowners and in view of the fact that the recruitment is, in fact, declining, would you see to it that the Indian shipowners recruit only Indian seamen and when the foreign companies employ Indian seamen, they do not discriminate between Indian seamen and European seamen ? That creates a very serious social problem. When this discrimination is removed, not only will the recruitment go up, by the Indian shipowners will be able to withstand the foreign competition much better.

[Mr. Deputy Chairman in the Chair]

DR. G. S. DHILLON : Sir, the hon. Member has raised certain questions. I could not foresee that they will also arise out of this, (*Interruptions*). Kindly listen to me. I am not going to argue with you. I am giving this information only because he has asked this information, even leaving aside what the question is that has been asked in the Calling Attention Motion. I take up the manning first. There is some disproportion between our own ships and foreign ships. At present, as I have seen, as against 18 to 20 British seamen in the ships of the same pattern, we normally have 39 to 44 Indian seamen in our own ships of the same pattern. As for the living conditions, I already made a reference to it that we will try to find out as to what the exact position is about them. At the present stage, I can just say that I thank you very much for this suggestion, and when I get the full information, I will pass it on to you. As regards the proportion of recruitment between Calcutta and Bombay, I did not know that you will be asking this question when this Calling Attention Motion comes up. But I will try to get the exact position and the figures and try to rectify if there is some imbalance, and according to the best interests of both Bombay and Calcutta. Please rest assured we in our own way will try to get the full picture, and if any time is available for you, I will be very happy if we can sit together, and I will lay before you full information, and this may be rectified, as I have already said, if there is any imbalance. About the seamen's employment, I have already said when replying to Mr. Cioudhury that we have this agreement with the Maritime Board and rectified by the International Shipowners Federation and the International Transport Workers Federation. And that is holding good for a couple of years, and we stick to that position. As I said, it is beyond our financial capacity to go beyond that, and this was the reason which is accepted despite the fact that this does not relate only to India but to all Asian countries. All

Asian countries are resisting it according to the stage of their development and economic viability. That is the position.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, the Call Attention was obviously based on a report which appeared in the reputed daily of Calcutta, the 'Business Standard', and most of the points which have been made out by Shri Nripati Ranjan Choudhury have been taken note of by the hon. Minister. And I do feel that he is light when he says that he does not have full information and that he will enquire into the thing. But, may I just, with your permission, point out that mainly the trouble in the Indian shipping is in the coastal shipping, whether of the load-carrying type or the passenger type, especially in the Konkan sea-coast? Sir, it is also a fact that Indian seamen are highly regarded by the international shipowners, and they always prefer to employ Indian seamen in their ships because they are proved to be very hard working and very able and all that. This is a type of physical drain, apart from the brain drain, which we are having. So, I would like to know whether it is not possible for up to engage all our seamen. Can the hon. Minister tell us how many Indian seamen are working on Indian ships and how many are working on foreign ships? Has he any statistics or any census about it? Will the hon. Minister give us an assurance that if there is any discrimination made with regard to the living conditions of crew and officers on Indian ships, he will forthwith abolish it? A point was made about the rations. If it is true, will he kindly ensure that this distinction is abolished because there should be no discrimination made between crew and officers. It is a very bad thing.

Then, Sir, my next question is that if there are any Indian shipowners who do not provide proper living conditions and rations to their crew, will the Government assure us that any loan assistance or other assistance which they may be getting will be stopped?

Lastly, Sir, I would like to say that it is high time that a thorough inquiry was made into the living conditions of our crew. I do not think that until now there has ever been any thorough inquiry made just as we have had inquiries conducted into the living conditions of industrial workers, and into the living conditions of agricultural workers. Perhaps, it is time that a powerful committee is appointed on the same lines to go into the living conditions and working conditions of Indian crewmen. Will the hon. Minister kindly consider this suggestion favourably?

DR. G. S. DHILLON : Sir, the hon. Member has asked information about the living conditions of employees on the coastal services. It is a very specific question and I will get information if he so desired because in this Calling Attention the question involved was the payment to our crew in terms of ILO recommendation. But, if he thinks that he needs information about our coastal shipping and living conditions I can inquire into that matter as a specific question and give him the information. So far as the total number of Indian crew is concerned, they number about 41,000. I do not want to hazard a guess as to how many of them are working on the Indian ships and how many on the foreign ships. We have got the information and I will give you the figures. About their living conditions, I have already replied to Shri Choudhury that I was very unhappy to read this information given in the press, which has been quoted. We will try to gather information and on that basis we may appoint a committee or some other body to go into this matter. But it all depends on the information that we first collect, what our terms of reference would be on which we would want this information to be collected and what would be our sources of information. We will try to ascertain it and then later on try to lay it before the House.

Sir, I could not give you the information about the exact number of Seamen employed on foreign ships. But out of the total number of 41,000 that I have just mentioned, only one-third are working on

[Dr. G. S. Dhillon]

our own ships and two-thirds are working on foreign ships.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA : Sir, what about the loan assistance ? Sir, if the Indian shipowners do not provide adequate living conditions to our crew, will you see to it that they do not get your loan assistance ?

DR. G. S. DHILLON : I assure you that as far as our own ships are concerned—as Mr. Kalyan Roy said about Scindia's and others—it is a matter within" our own authority and we can assert ourselves and I can definitely say that we will see to it. As far those who are employed on foreign ships, we will do it somehow in other ways and see as to what are the best methods to achieve that. In the case of crews serving on our own ships, it is not very difficult and I personally assure you and I assure you on behalf of the Ministry that it should be and it will be our moral duty to see that they are not discriminated against, whether it be the Scindias or anybody else. I know the Scindias are a very big company. I know they are a very dominating company but that does not entitle them to make any discrimination. I can assure Mr. Kalyan Roy and assure you also.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER RE ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO MOZAMBIQUE

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI BIPINPAL DAS) : Sir, the House is aware of the recent provocative and aggressive acts committed by the racist regime in Southern Rhodesia against Mozambique. In the face of these provocations, the Government of Mozambique, on March 3, 1976, closed the border and severed all trade and communications with Rhodesia. This courageous step impltmentmg U.N. sanctions has opened a new stage in the struggle for the liberation of the people

of Zimbabwe and has rallied world opinion in favour of Mozambique and the freedom movement in Zimbabwe.

The House will recall that, at the last Commonwealth Conference in Kingston, it was decided to assist Mozambique if it closed the border with Rhodesia thereby denying to itself the considerable revenues it earned from its road and rail links with Rhodesia. On 17th March, 1976, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution unanimously condemning the aggressive acts committed by the illegal minority regime in Southern Rhodesia and appealing to all States to provide immediate financial, technical and material assistance to Mozambique. We have also received a similar appeal from the Secretary General of the Commonwealth in a telegram addressed to the Prime Minister.

As the House knows, it has been the established policy of the Government of India to extend unstinted support and all possible assistance to the liberation movements in Africa, and to oppose the obnoxious policies of racism and apartheid pursued by the white minority regimes in Southern Africa. To the liberation movement in Mozambique, we have had the privilege of giving moral and material su-port during the struggle for independence.

Today, when Mozambique has taken the bold and principled step of imposing U.N. sanctions against Rhodesia the sympathies of the Government and people of India are wholly with Mozambique and the freedom fighters of Zimbabwe.

As a mark of our solidarity with the Government of Mozambique in this critical situation, we have decided to extend economic and technical assistance to Mozambique. The extent and form of such assistance will be determined only after we hear further from the Secretary General of the LTnited Nations and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth as well as from the Government of Mozambique about the priorities of their requirements.