

COUNCIL OF STATES

Tuesday, 9th March 1954

The Council met at two of the clock, MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

INCIDENTS OF FIRE IN C.O.D. JABBALPORE AND ORDNANCE FACTORY KHAMARIA

*240. SHRI M. VALIULLA: Will the Minister for DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a court of enquiry was appointed to investigate into the incidents of fire which broke out in the Central Ordnance Depot at Jabbalpore and the Ordnance Factory at Khamaria;

(b) if the answer to part (a) above be in the affirmative, what are the findings of this court regarding—

(i) the causes of the fires and (ii) the extent of damages caused by the fires; and

(c) what action has been taken on the Report submitted by the court?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR DEFENCE (SARDAR S. S. MAJITHIA) : (a) Yes.

(b) There were two fires in the C.O.D., Jabbalpore. One occurred on 20th/21st May 1953" and the other «n 5th September 1953. According to a Court of Enquiry, the first was due to the introduction of flaming material in a shed. The G.O.C.-in-C, Southern Command, has, however, held that the fire was most likely due to spontaneous combustion as a result of oily rags being kept in tins for a considerable period without inspection. The Court of Enquiry, in regard to the second fire, was of the view that it was due to spontaneous ignition of augmenting charges. The loss caused by the first fire was Rs. 26,210-10-0 and that caused by the second was Rs. 39,115-0-0.

As regards the Ordnance Factory, Khamaria, there was a fire on 14th 146 C.S.D.

July 1953, but the proceedings of the Court of Enquiry held in respect of this fire have not yet been received by Government.

(c) With regard to the first fire in the C.O.D., Jabbalpore, the G.O.C.-in-C, Southern Command, has recommended that disciplinary action should be taken against the personnel who were found to be negligent of their duties. This is being considered at Army Headquarters. The Court of Enquiry for the second Are pointed out certain deviations from Regulations that had been noticed in the storage of ammunition. Suitable instructions have been issued by Army Headquarters to all ammunition depots for guidance in future.

SHRI M. VALIULLA: May I know whether the same court of enquiry conducted the enquiries in both cases or were they different courts of enquiry?

SARDAR S. S. MAJITHIA: Subject to correction, they must have been different.

SHRI M. VALIULLA: When was the Court of Enquiry set up to investigate into the Khamaria fire, whose report is now expected, first appointed?

SARDAR S. S. MAJITHIA: I have not got the date, but it must have been immediately after the fire.

SHRI M. VALIULLA: It is now more than eight or nine months and still the report is awaited.

SARDAR S. S. MAJITHIA: It is regretted that there has been delay in this, but I will see to it that in future no such delays occur.

BREN GUNS MANUFACTURED IN ORDNANCE FACTORIES

*241. SHRI M. VALIULLA: Will the Minister for DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Bren Guns manufactured in the Indian Ordnance Factories are sold to other countries; and