

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: No, Sir. The sailing vessels are not generally regulated under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act. We are contemplating to bring forward a Bill to regulate the sailing vessels.

SHRIMATI VIOLET ALVA: When and where were these lost?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: The period is given in the answer. It relates to the period 1951—1953.

SHRIMATI VIOLET ALVA: Where—at what place?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: The steamship was lost near the place from which the hon. lady Member comes. It was lost off Bhatkal.

SHRI C. G. K. REDDY: The hon. Minister stated that sailing vessels did not come under the purview of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act. May I know if there are any regulations at all which govern sailing ships?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: No, I said no standards have been laid down as to the safe loading capacity under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act for these vessels and as such we are not able to say how many of the casualties were due to avoidable causes.

SHRI K. S. HEGDE: Has it come to the notice of the Government that many of these vessels scuttle themselves with a view to getting the insurance money?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: We are not aware of many such cases.

SHRI K. S. HEGDE: Is it not a fact that Government have instituted a number of enquiries in this connection and it is engaging the attention of the Director of Shipping?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: I am not able to answer that question. I shall look into it and give the answer later.

PROTECTION OF EYE-SIGHT OF RAILWAY RUNNING STAFF

*230. SHRI B. RATH: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that certain categories of Railwaymen, especially running staff, lose their normal eye-sight due to strenuous duties; and

(b) what steps Government propose to take to ameliorate their service conditions?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS AND TRANSPORT (SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN): (a) We have no such information.

(b) Does not arise.

SHRI B. RATH: In how many cases have Government taken any census of the running staff developing defects in eye every year?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you taken statistics of people who have developed weakness of eye-sight on account of their duties?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: I cannot give the figures offhand. The running staff specially are required to appear for these vision tests, after they are employed permanently, at the end of every three years, until they reach the age of 45, and afterwards at the end of every year they are asked to appear for vision tests.

SHRI B. RATH: Is it not a fact that in a large number of cases among the running staff it is found that there is a great percentage of defective eyes every year?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: I could not follow the hon. Member completely.

SHRI B. RATH: In the vision tests it has been found that every year a large number of running staff suffer from defective eye. Is it not a fact?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: I said that some people suffer from defective

vision. When one is below the standard laid down, and the minimum standards have been laid down, they are offered alternative employment. I cannot give the figures.

DR. P. C. MITRA: May I know whether periodical examination of eye-sight of running staff is made or not?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: I informed the House that it is being done.

DR. P. C. MITRA: Any defect detected or rectified free of cost?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: If the standard of vision goes below the standard laid down, they cannot be employed any more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is: You say that all people below 45 are examined once in three years and after 45 once a year. As a result of these periodical examinations have you found out that members of the running staff develop defective vision during the period of their service? That is the question.

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: Some do develop and such of those whose vision is below the standards laid down are offered alternative employment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are two questions. Number one is on account of their duties, does their vision defect increase? Number two is: You provide them with alternative employment, but are there any remedial steps taken—that is Dr. Mitra's question.

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: They are no exception from others. Because of their duty they don't develop any defect. I am not able to answer the question regarding remedial measures.

DR. R. P. DUBE: Is it not a fact that usually normal people get defective eye sight after 45?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Especially in Parliament.

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: They don't form an exception.

DR. W. S. BARLINGAY: Is that not true especially of engine drivers? I refer to the defect.

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: It applies also to the running staff.

SHRIMATI VIOLET ALVA: Who examines the eye sight? Is it the medical officer or the optician contractors?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: Medical Officer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very bad suggestion.

SHRI B. RATH: The answer given is trying to evade the question. It has been found that among drivers, helpers and firemen, a large proportion develop defective eyes and Government does not give us any figures about it and they try to avoid the issue. I want to know whether any treatment given to them is at their own cost or at Government cost?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: We are not trying to evade any question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Absolutely not.

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: We are prepared to place all the information before the House. I can give the figures to the hon. Member if he desires.

KHWAJA INAIT ULLAH: When any Railway servant's or running staff member's eyes become defective due to his service and he is ordered to buy glasses, I would like to know whether the Railway Department pays the price of the glasses, or is it paid by the Railway servant?

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: It is paid by the Staff Benefit Fund for class IV staff.

CANTEENS FOR RAILWAY EMPLOYEES

*231. SHRI B. RATH: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of running sheds and railway workshops in