

Port Trusts might be exempted from the purview of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, but this was not accepted by Government. There has since been no application for exemption.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Is it a fact that the Port authorities at Bombay assured the employees that the arrear sum of Rs. 75 lakhs would be paid to them and now they are trying to avoid paying that and so they have made some representation to the Government?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: It is not correct. The Port Trust is prepared to pay and it will be paid.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: May I take it that the same will apply to the port employees at Calcutta who also went on strike and demonstrated for payment of arrears?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: We have directed the port authorities in Calcutta also to look into the matter.

ACCIDENT AT THE MAJRI COLLIERY IN MADHYA PRADESH

*393. SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Will the Minister for LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the serious accident that occurred at the Majri Colliery in the Chanda district in Madhya Pradesh on the 5th August, 1953, resulting in the death of a number of workers;

(b) if so, what is the total number of deaths; and

(c) what are the causes that led to the occurrence of this accident?

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (SHRI V. V. GIRI): (a) Yes.

(b) Eleven.

(c) The accident was due to an inrush of large volume of water through a subsidence on the surface which was inundated by flood water. The water rushed into the mine

through the subsidence in great quantity and at high velocity as the workings in the seam were dipping at about 1 in 6. Eleven persons who were in the northern part of the mine had their retreat cut off by the inrush of water and were drowned. 38 workers, who were in the southern part, managed to escape.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Is it a fact that due to the complete absence of all safety measures and appliances, the rescue operations could not be successfully carried out?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: It is not correct. Everybody tried his best to avoid the accident, as this note of mine will show. The accident occurred on the 5th August 1953, at 5:30 P. M. and the Inspector of Mines whose headquarter is at Chindwara reached the spot at 4-30 P.M. on 6th August. He has enquired into the accident and the Chief Inspector is taking even stricter measures to safeguard and avoid such accidents in future. I wish to tell the House that they do take great precautions; but now they shall take even greater precautions to see that such accidents do not occur.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Is it a fact that there is no telephonic connection at the different levels and that even the warning bell did not go up to the 15th level where the miners were working?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: There is, I think, telephonic communication, but most probably it was not in order.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: May I know whether it is a fact that there is no electricity in this mine?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: I do not think that this mine has electricity.

SHRI K. C. GEORGE: Will the hon. Minister be pleased to enlighten us as to what were the rescue measures taken?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: Does the hon. Member want information as regards

the rescue measures taken at this place?

SHRI K. C. GEORGE: Yes

SHRI V. V. GIRI: The manager and others made desperate efforts at the risk of their lives to see if any of the entrapped persons could be contacted and taken out. But the current of water was so strong that they could not reach them.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Is it a fact that some years ago there was an accident due to earth slip and except for the sprinkling of loose earth no serious step was taken to prevent further accidents?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: I do not think so, but I cannot give a definite answer about it.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Are any steps taken to pay early compensation to the families of the deceased?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: Yes, immediate steps have been taken.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE: What are the extra measures that are now being taken by Government as greater precautions?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: For the present the management of the colliery has been instructed to see that no workers other than the pump drivers and their assistants are permitted to remain underground or to go underground as long as the flood water is there and threatens the bank of the river, and efforts are being made to give alternative employment to the men affected in this way.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: May I know whether the mine labourers will be paid compensation for the period of involuntary unemployment caused by the accident.

SHRI V. V. GIRI: There is no question of involuntary unemployment, because they have been provided alternative employment immediately.

SHRI C. G. K. REDDY: In view of the frequency of accidents all over India, may I know whether Government is considering the taking of stricter measures in order to afford the-maximum safety for the workers working in our mines?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: I can assure the hon. Member that the strictest measures are being taken continuously and the matter is continuously investigated. I would like to add that compared to other countries, the number of accidents here are not very many.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Have Government received a request from the miners' representatives for instituting an open enquiry into this accident?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: I don't think so.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR: Will the hon. Minister consider that suggestion?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: I will look into the suggestion.

SHRI KISHEN CHAND: It is a common occurrence to have flood waters coming into the mines. Could the hon. Minister tell us why suitable sized pumps were not installed so that the onrush of flood waters could be dealt with properly?

SHRI V. V. GIRI: The pumps were installed. But the onrush was terrible and on this extraordinary occasion the pumps were not able to meet the situation.

*394. [For answer, vide columns 2628—2632 infra.]

*395. [For answer, vide column 2632 infra.]

DETENTION OF WAGONS

*396. SHRI B. C. GHOSE: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the maximum and minimum number of wagons detained at Moghalsarai in the months of July and August 1953; and