

19-2-86 J 100-5

ORDINARY, MS.

Public	DEPARTMENT.
G.O., DATED 20-8-90	
No. 595.	

When given for copying

[Despatch Abstract.]

*Recording letter from the
Govt of India address-
ed to the Govt of the Straits
Settlements re the mortality
among Indian immigrants
in the Native States of Sungei
Ujong and Selangor.*

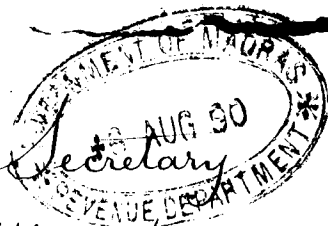
No. 1015 E.
6-7

FROM

THE HONBLE W. C. BENETT, C.S.,
Off. Secretary to the Government of India,

TO,

The Honble
The Colonial Secretary



Straits Settlements
Singapore, the 30th July 1890.

Revenue and Agricultural
Department.

gration.)

SIR,

In acknowledging the receipt of your letter No. 3251 of the 19th ult., on the subject of the mortality among Indian immigrants in the Native States of Sungei Ujong and Selangor, I am directed to express the satisfaction of the Government of India that instructions have been issued as suggested in para 2 of Sir E. Buck's letter No. 301 C dated the 3rd March last, and to add that the Government of India will be glad to be favoured in due course with information as to the results of the action proposed in para 5 of your letter.

I have &c.

(Sd.) W. C. Bennett.

Off. Secretary to the Govt. of India.

No.

No. 1016 E.
6-7

Copy, with copy of letter to which it is a
reply, forwarded to the Government of Madras
for information in continuation of Sir E. Buck's
endorsement No. 302 C dated the 3. March last.

In order to:

W. B. Macleay

Under Secretary to the Govt of India.
W.B.

BACK PAPER, No.

OF 18

FURTHER PAPER, No.

OF 18

READ AGAIN ORDER OF GOVERNMENT, DATED
18th No. MISCELLANEOUS.

ENCLOSURE ONE

CURRENT No. 2282

STATEMENT WITH DITTO

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT

STATEMENT WITH DITTO

PAPERS NOT FILED UP, BEING MEANT FOR DESPATCH
IN ORIGINAL (not pagged).

N.B.-

A = Copy in full.
B = Not to be copied.
F = Copy abstract only.
G = Copy heading only.

[9]

Public DEPARTMENT.

From

The Secy. & T. Dept.
(Emigration)

Dated

Received 6-3-90-

Enclosures 1.

SUBJECT.

The mortality in
among Indian immigrants in
the Native States of Saurashtra
& Sindh.

28/3/90 No 238 Misc Pub -
19/3/90 No 212/3 - u
18/3/90 No 209 - u
10/1/90 No 134/14/15 Misc
14/2/90 No 114/115 - u
15/2/90 No 122 - u

Recd. 20 August 1900 No 595.
Order.

Recorded, in con-
tinuation of G.O. No 209
dated 18th March 1890.

Boque Coll. of Bangalore.

No. 3251, dated Singapore, 19th June 1890.

From—A. P. TALBOTT, Esq., Acting Colonial Secretary,

To—The Secretary to the Government of India, Revenue and Agricultural Department.

IN continuation of my letter of the 21st March last of even number with this, I am directed by the acting Governor of the Straits Settlements to inform you that His Excellency has caused full enquiry to be made into the subject of Madrassis recruited for labour in the Colony, and more especially with regard to coolies engaged for service in the protected Native States.

2. His Excellency sees no reason to differ from the assumption expressed at the commencement of paragraph 2 of your letter under reply "that the climatic conditions on estates newly opened up for cultivation in the protected Native States offer greater risks to the health of coolies than those of estates in the Province of Wellesley and elsewhere which have been long established." I am, however, to state with regard to the high death-rate in certain of the protected Native States that there can be little doubt that in past years it has been in great measure due to the inferior stamp of coolies who have been brought from Madras. There is an unanimous agreement of opinion on this subject among those best qualified to judge, and I am to communicate to you the following extracts from Reports which have been received on the subject.

3 *Perak*.—The Acting Resident of this State writes: "It is without doubt that the mortality on newly opened Estates, such as all those in the Native States, is greater than that on old Estates, such as those in Province Wellesley. The main cause is the bad material sent us—beggars, weavers, dhobies, diseased persons and children, instead of agricultural labourers accustomed to out of door work." The Assistant Indian Immigration Agent in the same State reports: "I am sure this (the excessive mortality on certain estates) is due to the unhealthy and debilitated coolies who are sent here. It seems to me that the majority of those sent here are collected from the slums of the towns; a great many of them confess to being professional beggars * * * I think those in charge of the depot in Negapatam previous to the present arrangements are also to blame, or how could a man with curvature of the spine, another with hip disease and many others I could name get through the examination? All the Planters have free coolies employed, and though they get fever, &c., the death rate among them is very low. They are as a rule strong healthy coolies who could and did earn money in their own country, and could afford to pay their passage over; on the other hand the majority of the immigrants couldn't and wouldn't do any work, but simply entered into contracts for the sake of change and the rupee or two they got given them in India." The State Surgeon also writes: "One has only to visit the Central Prison at the present time and see a batch of some twenty or thirty sentenced to imprisonment for absconding from the estate where they were employed. They are mere boys and of poor physique, and not one of them capable of performing a day's work."

Selangor.—The British Resident in this State, writing in 1888, reports: "The result of enquiry I have made is generally that this was due not to the insanitary condition of the ground where the Immigrants laboured nor (except in a slight degree) to the nature of the accommodation and food provided, but to the fact that when they arrived in this State, a large portion of them were only fit for the Hospital. This I think is borne out by a letter dated the 27th June (1888) from the Acting Indian Immigration Agent, Penang, copy of which I enclose. From this letter His Excellency will see that the Surgeon in India who medically examined the coolies intended for us made the remarkable statement that he was under the impression that the Native States Planters did not require such good coolies as the Province Wellesley Planters, and that he often passed men on to the Native States whom he had rejected for Province Wellesley * * *." The Assistant Indian Immigration Agent in Selangor writes: "In my report for 1888,

alluding to the excessive death rate it is remarked—It is impossible to attribute the high rate of mortality to climatic influences, as in the various vicinities where Indian Immigrants reside and work, other nationalities including free Tamils also live and work, and there is really little or no mortality among them." The above are only a few of the extracts from reports to the same effect from Selangor.

Sungei Ujong.—The Residency Surgeon of this State writes: "Since the year 1885, about 1,600 Statute Immigrants have arrived in Sungei Ujong from India. Those sent over in 1886, 1887 and 1888 were not at all a satisfactory lot of coolies. A very large percentage of them were weakly improvident creatures who had never been used to labour of any sort. Many of them were suffering from deformity and disease on their arrival in the State, and were not able to do any work, spending their time between the Estate and Government Hospitals and finally sinking into a state of chronic debility with an almost invariably fatal termination."

Johor.—The Assistant Indian Immigration Agent in Johor reports: "The Government trace the sickness and mortality as due almost entirely to the inferior physique of the coolies received from India, the majority of whom seem to have had very weak constitutions and to be totally unfit for agricultural labour; and consequently when they arrived in Johor many of them, owing to the exposure necessarily involved in agricultural work soon fell ill and died."

4. His Excellency is glad to be able to report that the present state of the health of Statute Immigrants affords every hope for a great improvement in this respect. From Perak the Assistant Indian Immigration Agent writes: "Now-a-days 4 or 5 per cent. would be considered excessive, but in the old days the death-rate in some cases and in some particular districts was a great deal higher than any we have here." The Resident, Selangor, in his annual report for the year 1889 states: "The excessive mortality which prevailed among Indian Immigrants 1888 is not, I am glad to report, a feature of the returns for 1889. The death rate has fallen from 13.06 to 5.49." No Statute Immigrants are now employed in Selangor on road labour which has been found to be the most trying kind of work for them. Referring to the high death-rate on the Sungei Ujong Railway works in the year 1888 and up to June 1889, the Residency Surgeon reports: "Messrs. Hill and Rathbone then acting on my advice removed the coolies from the jungle altogether and made lines for them along the sea-shore. The sickness at once decreased and the number of deaths for the last half of 1889 was 25, diminishing from 9 in July to 2 in November and none in December. As regards Johor, though the Indian Immigration Agent is not satisfied that the coolies employed on some estates there have been treated with sufficient care as regards food and medicine, he reports, after a recent inspection, that the enforcement of the measures he has taken will, he believes, materially decrease the serious mortality which has occurred. His Excellency is addressing a special communication to the Government of that State, impressing on it the necessity of enforcing every possible means of maintaining the health of the immigrants there employed."

5. In connection with the subject of the cause of the high mortality in certain Native States, His Excellency desires me to state that he considers it right to mention that the Indian Immigration Agent and the authorities in Selangor and Sungei Ujong are strongly of opinion that the health of the indentured coolies would be materially improved by the adoption of a higher scale of pay and by a shorter period of contract. They are impressed with the unfavourable effect upon the mind and consequently on the physical health of coolie immigrants of the prospect of three years' enforced servitude upon wages fixed very much below the market rate of free labour, a prospect which has to be faced by every new comer, and which results in many cases in apathy, loss of health and death. His Excellency accordingly proposes to address the Governments of the Protected Native States with a view to inviting them to pass the necessary enactments for shortening the period of contract to two

years, and if possible for fixing a higher rate of wages than at present. A separate communication will be addressed to you on this subject when the result is known, but I may here mention that the most satisfactory results have been obtained on the Sungei Ujong Railway works from the adoption of a short period of contract and a higher rate of wages.

6. With regard to the suggestion contained in the latter portion of paragraph 2 of your letter under acknowledgment, I am to inform you that instructions are being given to the Medical Officer in charge of the Dépôt at Negapatam to take special precautions in the case of those coolies who are destined for employment in the less healthy regions.

7. His Excellency does not consider that much importance need be attached to the ill effects of the sea voyage which are alluded to in the letter of the Head Assistant Collector of Tanjore, dated the 3rd December last. The Indian Immigration Agent reports that it is very rare that coolies arrive prostrated by sea-sickness; and it certainly is not probable that a voyage of five days would have any permanent effect on the constitutions of the coolies. Any Immigrant arriving in a state of collapse would however in the ordinary course of events be sent straight to hospital, but as a matter of fact, a coolie does not begin work in a Native State (*e.g.*, Perak) until 4 or 5 days after his arrival in Penang.

8. I am to state in conclusion that His Excellency has every reason to hope that, with the establishment of the new Dépôt at Negapatam, the good effects of which are already acknowledged, and with the progress of the Native States in the means of communication and the appliances of civilization, the health and conditions of life of Indian Immigrants in these States will soon compare favourably with those of their fellow-countrymen on the older established Estates in the colony.

[G. N. K.]