

Cash payment: explanation from customs sought

By K. P. NAYAR

THE office of the comptroller and auditor-general of India is understood to have sought an explanation from the customs authorities regarding the payment of Rs. 52,500 to three people, who are claimed to have given information leading to the seizure of contraband worth about Rs. 7 lakhs.

The incident brings into focus the loopholes in the scheme under which people who give information on smuggling are entitled to a reward up to ten per cent. of the market value of the contraband seized on the basis of such information. The percentage of the reward varies according to the risk involved and the accuracy of the information given to the authorities.

The names and other particulars of the informers are kept secret and the authorities are not bound to disclose these particulars even to auditors or in a court of law.

RECORD ISSUE

Although the information leading to the seizure is required to be recorded by a customs officer, in cases where the information calls for instant action, the prior recording of the information and the informer's identity is not necessary.

This makes it possible for unscrupulous officials to take advantage of the secrecy regarding the identity of the informers and sanction the reward under fictitious names or to persons who really had nothing to do with the seizure, but are willing to collaborate with the officials.

It may be recalled that before the crackdown on smugglers, seizures with the help of informers were reported on a large scale.

In the particular case in question, the auditor's office, it is learnt, is not satisfied with the way in which the question of reward has been handled.

Morarji postpones cabinet expansion

NEW DELHI, May 24: The Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, is understood to have postponed plans for the expansion of his cabinet by a few more weeks in view of the forthcoming elections to various state assemblies.

At one stage, Mr. Desai had drawn up a list of about 20 ministers, who were to be inducted at the junior level, either as ministers of state or deputy ministers.—Samachar.

Law too for Chunder

NEW DELHI, May 24: The acting President, Mr. B. D. Jatti, has on the advice of the Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai, directed that Dr. P. C. Chunder, minister for education, social welfare and culture, will temporarily attend to urgent work of the ministry of law, justice and company affairs also, according to a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique issued here tonight.—Samachar.

Kaushal meets Charan

NEW DELHI, May 24: The governor of Bihar, Mr. Jagannath Kaushal, had a meeting with the Union home minister, Mr. Charan Singh, here today.—Samachar.