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12.10 hrs.

Title: Regarding reported accident at the construction site of Metro Railways in Delhi.

MADAM SPEAKER: Now we take up matters of urgent public importance. Shri Gurudas Dasgupta.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA (GHATAL): Madam, with a heavy heart I seek to raise, in the 'Zero Hour' and draw the attention of the entire country and the Government, the issue of the great tragedy that has befallen Metro construction yesterday. It is the second consecutive accident. Eight months before, there was another accident that killed two persons. In this particular accident, 30 people of Gammon India Limited were working. Out of 30, six people are already dead, some people may be dying today and 15 are critically injured.

Madam, how has it happened in the citadel of power in the Capital of India? A launching girder had crumbled down. The pillar that collapsed leading to the tragedy had developed a crack three months before. The crack was not carefully repaired. It is a grave omission that led to this tragedy. Without carefully repairing the cracked pillar, the construction was in a hurry because of the pressure of the Government they would like to complete the construction before the Commonwealth Games.

Frequency of accidents in Metro sites spotlights serious violation of Central Government laws for construction workers. These poor workers were always the victims everywhere in the country. There is a law passed by Parliament for the welfare of construction workers and that is called the Buildings and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996. This Act and its accompanying Cess Act have not been implemented.

My complaint is that a Central Government law is not being implemented in Delhi under the nose of the Central Government. The Act requires, under section 38, that there will be a Safety Committee, a Joint Committee of the Workers and the Management and the Safety Committee will meet every month to review the safety, the quality of the safety and the precaution that has to be taken to prevent accidents as per the provisions of the law. Had the law been implemented, had the Safety Committee been formed, had the review been done, this calamity would not have happened. My complaint is that safety is in default in Delhi in Metro construction. There is no monitoring and the construction law is being violated. All this is being done to hurry up the construction so that this Metro line could be completed before the Commonwealth Games.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please conclude.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I will conclude in just one minute Madam.

What is the situation? Contractors are being appointed and then contractors appoint sub-contractors and the sub-contractors appoint the sub-sub-contractors. This is the situation. This is how no monitoring takes place. The precaution and the precondition that is imposed on contractors do not apply in the case of sub-contractors and sub-sub-contractors. This is the reason for the tragedy. I am giving you an example. Afron Infrastructure was found responsible for the earlier accident in Laxmi Nagar. The firm was blacklisted but not removed. What a sorry position? It was blacklisted but not removed. The same Gammon India, which is responsible for this collapse now, had constructed a fly-over in Hyderabad which had also collapsed in the same way. Therefore, it is not a question only of violation of laws. It is a question of jungle rule absolutely of sub-contractors and also sub-sub-contractors.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please conclude. You are far exceeding your time.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Madam, in an unusual hurry to prepare for the Commonwealth Games, this is being done. So I demand a judicial inquiry into the whole safety measures. This may be under the Government of Delhi, but the Government of India is funding the whole project. Therefore, the matter is fit to be raised in Parliament. I demand a judicial inquiry into the whole thing and those who have been blacklisted should be removed and proper monitoring should be done so that poor contract labours are not slaughtered like pigs in the heart of the Capital of India.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. The hon. Minister wants to respond.

DR. RAM CHANDRA DOME (BOLPUR): Madam, I would like to associate myself with the matter raised by Shri Gurudas Dasgupta.

MADAM SPEAKER: All right.

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): Madam, with your permission, I would like to respond

spontaneously to the vital matter raised by my friend Shri Gurudas Dasgupta. As reported by DMRC, a launching girder along with a portion of a Metro viaduct under construction collapsed at Jamrudpur near East of Kailash in South Delhi at about 5.00 a.m. on 12.7.2009.

A total number of six workers, including one Junior Engineer of M/s Gammon India Limited who are the contractors for this portion of Central Secretariat-Badarpur Corridor, died in the accident. Out of those dead, three were trapped in the debris; another 15 workers are injured and out of them two are seriously injured.

A compensation of Rs.5 lakh is being paid to the kin of all the deceased in addition to the compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act. Those who are grievously injured will be paid a compensation of Rs.2 lakh and those injured will be paid a compensation of Rs.50,000.

The traffic on the road has been closed at Kailash Colony T-Point, LSR College-Blue Bells School T-Point and Amar Colony Police Station. Rescue operations are in full swing involving six cranes of capacity of 250 tonnes and one crane of capacity of 400 tonnes. Gas cutters and over 100 engineers are drawn from all metro sites, apart from Police and Civil Defence personnel.

In spite of delay caused due to rain, partial traffic is likely to be restored by 4 p.m. today. A helpline, No.23414461, has been started to inform the public about the developments. The estimated direct loss due to the accident is Rs.6 crore. The accident is likely to cause delay to this portion of the project by about three months. However, the overall target of commissioning of Central Secretariat-Badarpur Corridor, namely, September 2010, would remain unchanged. A high-level four-member committee has been constituted to investigate the incident. The members are Prof. A.K. Nagpal of the Civil Engineering Department, IIT, Delhi, Prof. P.R. Bose, Professor of Structural Engineering, Delhi College of Engineering, Mr. Steve Lawry, Project Director, General Consultant, DMRC, and Mr. Rajan Kataria, Chief Engineer, Design, DMRC will work as the Coordinator.

The committee is to submit its report within ten days, namely, by 22 July 2009. The committee will go into the causes leading to the accident, including checking designs, workmanship, quality of material used, method of construction and precautionary measures to be taken at other work sites.

Madam, I would like to respond to some of the points made by a senior Member, like, Shri Gurudas Dasgupta. First of all, I would like to clarify categorically that the accident did not take place because of any hurry. We are, no doubt, keen about completing various projects relating to Commonwealth Games, but we shall never compromise on the quality of work just for the sake of any particular project. I would like to emphasise that point with all the force at my command.

As for the reasons for the accident, I can only say it is being looked into by a very high-level committee.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I have stated very clearly that the rules are being flouted...*(Interruptions)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Please address the Chair.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): The defect was also detected three months back...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: A high-level committee of independent experts has been constituted to submit the report just within ten days. If necessary, it will certainly look into various aspects. If you want more aspects to be included in the Terms of Reference, we shall be willing to do so. The Report will be submitted in just 10 days. We will look at the Report and take a view.

As for accidents, I must say that any accident is unfortunate; any loss of life is unfortunate. However, we must look at the track record of DMRC in respect of accidents, in terms of global index...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Repeated accidents are taking place.â€¦ *(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I agree with you but there is a way of examining the track record of DMRC in respect of accident. There is a global index known as Index LTIFR and we do not suffer by contrast.

While the record of DMRC is 0.4, the record of Singapore is 1.1, and London Underground is 0.32. Therefore, whenever a huge work is constructed...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : You are talking about globalization figures....*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I am not talking about globalization....*(Interruptions)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Please sit down. Let the Minister reply.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BIBHU PRASAD TARAI (JAGATSINGHPUR): A judicial inquiry should be conducted....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: May I tell you friends that judicial inquiry is no panacea? We are not averse to ordering any judicial inquiry. Will you kindly wait for the First Report?

Secondly, in all these matters, we have global indices. I referred to one global index. Therefore, in terms of track record, in respect of accidents, I should say that DMRC does well. All the points mentioned by you will be looked into by the Committee if necessary. If you want, I will come back to you. Therefore, I do not think there is any cause for undue concern. It shall be our endeavour to prevent recurrence of any accident. I would like to assure the House that our concern for the Commonwealth will not be allowed to compromise the quality of work on the way.

DR. RAM CHANDRA DOME : I would like to know whether the Government is taking full responsibility of the treatment of the injured workers....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: We will take full care of the families of the deceased; we will take full care of the workers injured....(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: This will not go on record.

(*Interruptions*)*

*Not Recorded.