

843 *Statt. by Minister re. continuance of scheme for supply of wheat & rice at special subsidised rates in ITDP Areas*

APRIL 18, 1990

*Disc. under rule 193 844
Accident due to fire in 383UP
pass. Train on 16.4.90*

[Prof. M.G.K. Menon]

National Cultural Policy will be worked out and this will take some time. But the most important point that I would like to made with regard to culture is that, our education and our culture as referred to by several Members, have to be appropriately linked. We must ensure that our education includes not only, the cultural element in the sense most people understands culture, which is dance, drama, music, performing arts and so on, but the intrinsic value system which make the complete humanbeing. That is what the Cultural Policy would aim at, rather than efforts to project it purely in terms of a large scale possible activity. I have not been able to cover all the points at the time which is available and I hope there will be an opportunity for me to cover it in the winding up tomorrow. The debate is concluding tomorrow.

17.13 hrs.

[English]

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Continuance of the Scheme for Supply of wheat and rice at Specially subsidised rates in Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) Areas and the Tribal Majority states and its Extension to North Cachar and Karbi-Anglong Districts of Assam

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA): Sir, hon'ble Members are aware, that the scheme for supply of wheat and rice at specially subsidised prices to the inhabitants of Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) areas and the tribal majority States was announced in November, 1985 and its implementation began from December, 1985. At present, it covers the areas (excluding urban agglomerations) falling under I.T.D.Ps and the tribal majority States/U.Ts. of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya,

Nagaland, Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The supplies of foodgrains under the scheme are allocated by the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations concerned from out of the monthly allotments of wheat and rice made by the Central Government under the Public Distribution System. Under the scheme, wheat and rice are distributed to the beneficiaries, both tribals and non-tribals, at prices substantially cheaper than the open market prices. At present, the maximum and retail price fixed by the Central Government under the scheme is Rs. 1.79 per kg. for wheat and Rs. 2.19 per kg. for common rice.

The scheme was first sanctioned upto March 31, 1986 and has subsequently been extended on a year-to-year basis. Govt. has decided to continue the scheme for one more year from the 1st April, 1990 without any modification of the existing guidelines.

The coverage of the scheme has now been extended to two hill districts of Assam viz. North Cachar and Karbi-Anglong. The Central Government has taken this decision in response to the long-pending request of the Government of Assam for extension of the benefit of scheme to these districts as their population is predominantly tribal and these are covered under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution. All the areas falling in this Schedule except these two districts are already covered under the scheme.

17.15 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

Accident Due to Fire in 383 Up Mokama-Danapur Passenger Train on 16.4.1990

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We now take up discussion under rule 193. Shri Harish Rawat may initiate the discussion.

[Translation]

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, yesterday we had the misfortune of receiving a number of news. On the one hand, Mokama-Danapur Passenger train caught fire in which dozens of people lost their lives and on the other hand more than 100 persons died after consuming poisonous food at Basti. Both these incidents are really heart rendering news for any ordinary person. By realising the agony and pain of the people burning in a closed railway bogie I still feel horrified. The hon. Railway Minister yesterday deeply realised the agony of the people and rightly said that he was still terrified by imagining the agony and pain of the people in the burning bogie.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, apparently this incident is an evidence of inefficiency of the Railway Administration but if we go deep into the statement of the hon. Minister and the press reports published thereafter and the information we are getting from the local people in Patna, we can definitely say that Railway Administration Danapur Division, Railway employees and the police personnel are as much responsible for this incident as any criminal responsible for any heinous crime. The statement made by the Railway Minister yesterday shows the seriousness of the incident but it does not show the seriousness of the crime of the persons responsible for the incident and that thing is perturbing me. Shri Mahabir Prasad, the General Secretary of our Party has met the injured persons at Patna and made some information available to us which I would like to place before the House. I am not doing it with the intention to criticise the Railway Minister or the Government but my intention is that we should consider this incident an eye opener in which more than 100 persons lost their lives and the Railway Minister the Government the Railway Administration and all of us should endeavour that such incident may not secure in future and we may not get unfortunate occasion to discuss such incident in the House. From this incident four lapses are obvious before us. The hon. Railway Minister indicated in his statement

yesterday that a leaking gas cylinder was kept in the railway bogie which caught fire. So I would like to know how the gas cylinder was kept in the bogie? Those who travel by trains know that a warning is written all the Railway compartments that 'carrying of inflammable materials is prohibited' and 'Smoking is prohibited in the trains'. In spite of this warning, how a passenger was allowed to carry gas cylinder in the train? Gas cylinder is not a small article which can be carried in the pocket. That cylinder must have been kept in the pleasure of the checking staff and the police. It shows the complicity of the Railway personnel on that section and the police administration. It shows that any body can carry anything in the train. People even say that fire work explosives on Diwali festival are also carried in the trains. It has also been reported in the press that diesel containers were also kept in that bogie. It is a serious matter. Therefore, I would say that you may not inform us about the guilty persons but atleast the Railway Minister and the Railway Administration must have such information. It is not we alone who have raised this matter but the Health Minister of Bihar, belonging to your Party has also raised this matter and even said that he smelt conspiracy in it. So I would like to know whether it is a regular practice there and if it is so, it is more sessions matter that the conspiracy. Secondly it has been clearly slated in the newspapers that daily commuters used to pull chains every now and then and to avoid chain pullings, the chain system which could be used in emergency had been removed and no body was aware of it. The railway Administration has taken this decision on their own to prevent the recurring incidents of chain pullings which used to stop the train at many places and cause delay. Had there been a chain system in the train the tragedy could have been averted, and many lives could have been saved. The wailing and crying of the burning passengers must have reached the adjoining bogies and had there been chain even in one bogie, the people would have pulled the chain and many lives could have been saved. The chains of all the bogies had been removed so there was no question of any attempt to

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stop the train by the passengers of other bogies. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon Railway Minister as to who took the decision to remove the chain which could be used in case of emergency? Was this decision taken by the Railway Board or the local Railway Administration? After all some one must be held responsible for this decision. It should be made known as to who is responsible for this decision? They wanted to hide their inefficiency and that is why they took this dangerous decision to remove the chain to avoid the recurring of the incidents of chain pullings.

The third lapse came to notice from the statement of the Minister and the press reports. I would request the hon Minister to either contradict it or confirm it. It is reported that three doors out of four of the bogie which caught fire were jammed and their lock system was out of order. That is why the people rushed towards one door only because there was no other way to come out. Had all the four doors been in order the people would have jumped out of the train and saved their lives and there would have been hardly 2-4 casualties in the incident. It was unfortunate that they could not jump out of the train. The people travelling on the roof top jumped from the train and received minor injuries but the people travelling inside the bogie could not jump out.

The fourth glaring example of negligence is that 100 or 150 persons were compelled to travel in a small compartment like goats and sheep. The Association of Daily Passenger there had been constantly drawing the attention of the Railway Administration to this act and making demand to run additional shuttle trains in view of large number of daily passengers which include vegetable vendors, milkmen etc on that section but little heed was paid to this demand. It was urged that in case it was not possible to introduce more shuttle trains, additional bogies could be attached to some trains which run on this route but the demand has not been met so far. It has become the

destiny of Bihar to be neglected in every matter. It is the irony of fate that regardless of the number of representatives Bihar sends here whether a Minister or someone else, whenever there is a demand or extending certain facilities to Bihar, there is hesitation and the demand is not met. That is why in certain bogies more than 100 passengers travel together packed up like goats and sheep. They would keep sacks filled with vegetables, milk cans etc in the doorway and there would be little space left for the passengers to get off. Today, it was reported in the press that the work which was supposed to be done by the Railway authorities was done by the people themselves. Even if after repeated demands of the people trains could not be started at least additional bogies could be attached but that demand was also ignored. After all what is the reason behind it?

The most important point is that you are better aware about that place and the people belonging to your party may have given you information in regard to the fact that the passengers indulge in ticketless travel by bribing the concerned officials once a month. The policeman in charge of the local Thana is bribed and the permanent officers and employees of the Railways are also bribed for this purpose (*Interruptions*).

AN HON MEMBER All these things are happening since your days.

HARISH RAWAT This does not matter whether it has been happening since our time. Even if this practise is being carried out since our times, it is unfortunate that you came to power and this stigma attached to you but even then you do not understand it. I do not think that it is connected with party politics. It is an unfortunate incident for which we all regret and I am only pointing out towards those shortcomings which have emerged so that the hon Minister of Railways may be able to remove them.

You have stated that national programme would be launched to educate the railway passengers which is welcome. As

regards railway safety whether it is outside the train or inside, people should be given due information through different media as well. Workshops should also be set up in this regard. All these points which I have raised show that although there is a need to educate the passengers in regard to safety, yet it is more necessary to educate the railway employees and officers and to remind them of their responsibilities and how are they carrying them out how they are taking bribes, colluding with the undesirable elements or are they providing necessary facilities to the passengers so that the life of the common man could be safe.

In the newspapers several other points have been mentioned. I would not like to go into allegations and counter-allegations. As soon as hon. Minister came to know about that tragic incident he went there personally and whatever instructions could possibly be issued at his level were issued and action has also been taken on that basis. The hon. Chief Minister of Bihar visited the site of the tragic incident and took some immediate steps as well. I would like to appreciate the promptness with which action was taken but the acts which came to light are quite painful. The first matter of concern is the state of affairs in Nalanda Medical College which not only lacked facilities but there was negligence to the extent that the injured victims reached there after the Chief Minister's arrival and no senior doctor was present there to attend to them. The Medical Superintendent himself reached there after he came to know of Shri Lalu Prasad Yadav's arrival. People still say that the lives of many victims who were in a serious condition could have been saved but it could not be done due to the non-availability of senior and junior doctors. One such unfortunate case is that of Shri Mithlesh Kumar about whom it has been mentioned that he was admitted with 80 per cent burns and had antitetanus injection been administered in time and timely medical attendance been given he would have been saved. He remained alive till he came to know of the fate of his wife and daughter. Both of them died of severe burns. He regained conscious-

ness only once because timely medical aid was not given.

Another fact which we came to know is that antitetanus injection, which is an ordinary injection and which should be available even in the smallest of hospitals was not available in the two medical colleges and the Railway Administration and the hospital were both engaged in making allegations, and counter-allegations regarding the responsibility to arrange for the supply of such medicines. Both of them alleged that it was the responsibility of the other. A worn-out van was sent in the name of an ambulance. These are the things, which must be looked into. It was for some time after your arrival that the administration remained alert and as soon as you left Patna the alertness also disappeared. The condition was such that there was no one present even to provide necessary information to the relatives of the victims. The information which I am giving is of the person who had made on the spot enquiries and spoken to the victims and the relatives of those who could manage to reach there. I am referring to hon. Mahabir Prasad who is also an hon. Member of this House. When such train accidents occur, the relatives of the victims are anxious to see them because it is a common human tendency to fear that his kith and kin might not be one of the victims. The situation today has become such that when the relatives of the victims requested the Railway authorities to make arrangements for special trains so that they could go and see them, it was rejected. Apart from this those who were admitted in those hospitals were shifted from there. The relatives of the victims who were well-off wanted them to be shifted to nursing homes because basic facilities were not available there. Even drinking water supply was not there. Drinking water was supplied only when necessary instructions in this regard were issued by the Chief Minister. The tanker reached there only after that. This means that without the instructions of the Chief Minister even drinking water could not be made available. I would like to draw your attention to this case of serious negligence.

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[Sh. Harish Rawat]

In the context of all the aforementioned points, I would like to point out to the hon. Minister that these matters are above party politics and when such incidents occur, it is very unfortunate for one and all. In fact, the pain which we suffer on this account is not less than that suffered by you. Nobody with slightest humanity can remain indifferent. I think that the hon. Minister is the worst sufferer because he heads the Railway Ministry. He has seen the accident victims and their charred bodies. He has also seen bodies, which have been mutilated beyond recognition. I understand your feelings. I am not saying all these things to cause pain to you. You have taken all possible steps in this regard but you have also taken one wrong step. You propose to order an inquiry by the Railway Commission in this regard. I would urge that in view of the four aforementioned points of serious negligence, that is, the kind of treatment given to the injured victims admitted in the hospitals and so on, a judicial inquiry instead of an inquiry by the Railway Commission should have been ordered. It will be better if a High Court judge is asked to go into this matter so that it could become clear as to what caused this accident. It is regretful to say that such a re-arranging incident occurred in our country. Our own people were burnt alive to death.

[English]

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR (Barackpore): We are discussing a very unfortunate accident of recent times in the Railways. Already the situation has been described by hon. Member, Shri Rawat. He said that he did not want to go into party politics, but party politics was brought in here in this discussion by him. However, I do not want to go into those points. There will be other occasions to deal with those points.

As regards the accident that has taken place in Bihar, I want to make two points clear. One is that the Railways have to take a long-term programme and the other is to

take immediate steps. After Independence, the necessity for the railways increased but the development in the railways has not been commensurate with the increasing demand. That is the main reason why congestion, overcrowding, overlapping, dislocation of traffic, etc., etc. are happening. In his Budget Speech, the hon. Railway Minister had told this House that even the fast moving trains cannot move on time because of congestion on the railway track. We did not develop our railway tracks according to the necessity..(Interruptions).

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, you have to make your statement on the statement made by the hon. Minister. You cannot widen the scope of discussion.

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR: I will not widen the scope, Sir. So, Sir, that is one point that we shall have to think on a long-term basis that if we want to avoid recurring of such accidents in future, Railways must develop the infrastructural facilities and other things on a long-term basis. Just at present, the victims and their families must be attended to with adequate compensation. The compensation declared, I think, is not adequate. As stated by the Railway Minister, a campaigning programme should be taken up in order to educate the people about the aspect of safety and safety measures.

As regards the accident, I do not understand how the acetylene cylinder which was leaking, did not burn. It is a scientific fact that when an acid reacts and catches fire, it increases in volume more than five times. Therefore, it is very much evident from the nature of the accident that the acetylene gas was leaking for a pretty long time and the entire bogey was charged with acetylene gas. Otherwise, if an acetylene cylinder catches fire just at a point of leakage, it must be an explosion. This is the chemical outcome. It cannot be avoided. Therefore, I demand that an inquiry must be held right-earnest, going into the details as to how this accident happened and necessary immediate measures should be taken so that the congested passenger trains are sufficiently

subjected to safety measures and other supervisory activities.

[*Translation*]

SHRIRAMDHAN (Lalganj): Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, this rail accident was so heart rending that the entire country was shocked to hear of it. The hon. Minister is aware that the railway system in Bihar is totally mismanaged. There is over crowding in trains, so much so these people sit on the roof of the coaches, in the front and rear portions of the engines, in the joints between coaches and in the bottom portion of the coaches where the battery is placed. People occupy any place they get when they travel by trains. The possibility of such accidents cannot be ruled out in such conditions. According to the Railway Act, inflammable material is not allowed to be carried in trains but there is no such restriction in Bihar. Hardly anyone even buys a ticket in Bihar (*Interruptions*)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh): Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, I am on a point of order. These may be some people who travel ticketless but to say that hardly any one in Bihar ever buys a ticket is indeed a very derogatory commit on the entire State of Bihar. This should not go on record.

SHRI JAG PAL SINGH (Hardwar): Sir, this is an objectionable statement. These may be a few people who do not purchase tickets. But to make such a sweeping statement about a state in the House is certainly objectionable. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

SHRI SHAILENDRANATH SHRIVASTAVA (Patna): You will know the actual position if you look at the way tickets are booked at Patna station. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAM DHAN: You people do not have information about this. The hon. Prime Minister himself will vouch for this. When we had gone to Janmui in Monghyr and kiul Acharya Ramamurthy and some others had

come to the railway station to see us off. There was no accommodation either in 1st class or any other class. We had to come standing upto Patna. How many trains have alarm-chains? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI ISHWAN CHAUDHARY: Sir, the queue for purchasing tickets is so long that people jump the queue buy to tickets. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member, you can express your views when your turn comes. Please sit down.

SHRI RAM DHAN: Sir, in this world people are afraid of the bitter truth. How many trains in Bihar have the alarm-chain? (*interruptions*)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Sir, please give me an opportunity to speak. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAMDHAN: Sir, my point is (*Interruptions*)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Sir, I was present at the scene of the accident. The hon. Railway Minister also knows this...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Member, you cannot compel him to speak the way you want him to speak. You may say whatever you want to say when your turn comes.

SHRI RAM DHAN: Sir, once a similar accident occured involving the Upper India Express. At that time, the late Shri Raj Narain was an M. P. He had raised the question of the non provision of the alarm chain in that train. At that time also many people lost their lives in the fire. If there had been an alarm chain the train could have been stopped any many lives saved. The alarm-chain is removed from trains and this does not benefit the railways in any way but causes have to the public. On the 15th, I was travelling by the Himalayan Queen from Chandigarh. On the way an unauthorised person entered the coach and tried to attack the passengers who some how managed to escape by closing the door. During this fracas someone

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pulled the alarm chain but it did not work and the train kept moving. Eventually the train stopped at the next station. What I am trying to emphasize is that there should be alarm chains in all trains and they should be in perfect working order. The attitude should not be one of killing the patient if the disease he is suffering from is not being cured.

The alarm chain is misused also. These is a mentality among villagers to stop the train at their doorstep. So they pull the alarm chain whenever they fancy. It is due to this reason that alarm chains have been removed from trains. But I feel that if an alarm chain had been there this mishap had been averted.

I would another like to raise 2-3 points. A good number of passengers were there in the train when it caught fire. Three doors were closed and one was open. People tried their best to stop the train but to no avail. A guard at one of the railway crossings informed the next station where the train stopped. The train stopped. The train was moving at its own speed while the passengers were being burnt alive. As hon. Shri. Harish Rawat said, a proper inquiry should be conducted into the accident. All the problems in the railway system like entry of unauthorized persons in reserved coaches must be looked into. Railway officials and others connected with safety on the railways can only attend to safety matters. The late Pandit Vibhuti Narain Mishra used to say in this House that the condition of railways in Bihar is so bad that ticket holders travel standing while the ticketless travellers occupy the seats. This has been happening for years. The Railways did not consider this an administrative problem and this led to the accidents. Derailment of trains is a frequent occurrence on the Delhi-Howrah route. All these things should be looked into. A judicial enquiry into this accident should be conducted so that facts may come to light.

DR. SHAIENDRANATH SHRIVASTAVA (Patna): Hon. Mr. Deputy Speaker

Sir, unfortunately this accident occurred in my constituency. The 16th, on which this accident occurred, has been called 'black Monday' by hon. Shri Vijay Kumar Malhotra. On this day, apart from the fire accident on the train in Patna, a fire broke out in a market in Delhi and destroyed many shops. So can we argue against the popular belief that such accidents are the handiwork of antinational elements who are hatching a conspiracy to destabilize the country. I don't want to add anything as the hon. Railway Minister himself visited the spot and ordered an inquiry into the accident. The only point I want to repeat is what hon. Shri. Ram Dhan and Shri Harish Rawat said that the inquiry should be conducted by a judicial committee. This accident does not merely reflate the inefficiency on the part of the Railways but there are many other points also which arise and I would like to discuss them. Therefore it is essential that the inquiry be held by a judicial committee and the findings of the committee be analysed in depth. All factors which could have led to the accident, like overcrowding of the compartments, non-provision of the alarm chain or carrying an acetylene cylinder as part of the luggage should be considered. The train involved is 383 up which runs between Mokamch and Ara. On earlier occasions too I had drawn the hon. Railway Minister's attention to the lack of adequate railway facilities in Bihar, particularly in the region I have mentioned. For all proposals the hon. Railway Minister has the same answer, that they cannot be included in the current financial year. Bihar is always ignored in the matter of introduction of new trains on provision of additional facilities for railway users. Two overcrowded bogies of the train caught fire and an estimated 300 passengers lost their lives. It is most unimaginative on the part of the Government to claim that only 80 passengers lost their lives when two entire bogies were completely burnt. The reason why nearly 300 people were travelling in the two bogies was that they could not get any other means of transport. As far as alarm chains are concerned these have been provided in mail/express trains only and not on passenger trains. I request the hon. Railway Minister to provide

this facility on passenger trains also as these are used by ordinary people. Just now an attempt was made to give a new twist to the discussion. But nobody can say that any such arrangement was ever available in the local trains. It was brought to your notice that many people were burnt to death and yet many more received burn injuries in the accident but they could not be taken to railways hospital because it was located at Danapur whereas the accident took place at Patna. In view of difficulties experienced this time in this connection I would like to request the Hon. Minister of Railways to set up a full fledged Railways hospital at Patna. Hon. minister is aware of sorry state of affairs of hospitals at Patna. A Primary Health Centre cannot be expected to cope with the needs of even ordinary patients and on any ordinary days. The failure of those hospitals which are no better than a primary health centre to provide medical relief to the accident victims and to meet such a emerged situation could be well understood. Common people like vegetable and milk venders, students who were going to appear in examinations and office goers were travelling in that ill fated train. I would like to request you to pay attention to it. There is no doubt that the Government is increasing passenger amenities in the trains, but those amenities have been mostly provided for the passengers travelling in the long distance trains and in upper classes. But no such amenities are available to common people travelling in ordinary class. I would like to request you to pay attention to these people also. If somebody wants to take political mileage out of a tragedy like this, it is a very unfortunate on his part to do so. But I am sorry to point out that such an unfortunate situation was created in this case when the question of taking the injured to nearby hospitals came up and the Government assistance available at the site proved inadequate. Students and social workers came forward and offered their services for these purposes. But they were prevented from extending any help. The activists of Vidyarthi Parishad were not allowed to do voluntary service. When the R S S activists offered their services for taking the dead bodies to the proper place or

their last rites, the district administration asked them not to involve themselves in that work. It appears that politics is certainly being played somewhere or the other on such a sensitive occasion. It was not desirable. This matter does not concern the Railways only but it is a question of neglecting Bihar. As I have already said and it has also been said in some other context in the presence of the hon. Minister of Railways that Railways are the life line of the nation, it is the life line of the country, but today it has become death line. No medical facilities are available in the trains. Lives and properties of the passengers are not safe in the trains and there is nobody to take their care. I had put a question in this House in this regard and raised this issue. The Government has put the responsibility of providing security to passengers on the G R P. Then what role do the R P F play? Are they meant for providing security to goods only and not the passengers? It was also said that law and order is a state subject and the G R P will have to work under the State Government. Recently when the hon. Minister of Railways presented states paper on Railways a seminar in that context was organised in Patna. Senior Officers of the Eastern Railway were present there on this occasion. I raised the point that if the railway authorities wanted the passengers to undertake safe journey, they must make all arrangements to provide security to their lives and property. In response to that the I G (G R P) said that for the last 10 years, there has been no new recruitment in the G R P. Elucidating the deplorable condition of his department, he said that it is beyond their capacity. There is no medical facility in the trains. Though other amenities are being provided in superfast and deluxe trains, facilities like medicine and medical aids are not being provided in these trains also. I tried to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Railways on several occasions, but to no avail. At the same time I would like to say that this fire incident in bogies of the trains exposed the black deeds of several departments in Bihar. In the recent past, incidents of fire took place in Delhi in which some shops were gutted in fire. With reference to that the Municipal Corporation of

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[Dr. Shalendranath Shrivastava]

Delhi announced that they would rejuvenate their fire services by investing Rs. 6 crores with Central assistance. In Bihar fire services exist on paper only. Fire tenders will never be available in Bihar at any exigencies. We talk here about ticket-less travelling in trains, but the fire services do not require any ticket to reach a place of fire. It is clear cut case of administrative failure. When we are holding a discussion on this subject, through you, I would like to request the hon. Minister of Railways to put pressure on the Government of Bihar to strengthen its fire services. Had these services been in regular condition, so many people would not have lost their lives in this accident. The fire services do not come under the railways. They come under the State Government. As such, hon. Minister of Railways should make efforts on his own so that these incidents do not recur in future. The incident that took place in Bihar is most tragic. It is, therefore necessary that concrete steps are taken to check recurrence of such accident in future. At least Rs. 2 lakhs should be paid as compensation to the next of the kin of the deceased of this accident and the injured should be paid at the rate of Rs. 50,000 each. Besides, jobs in the railways or any other department where they could be absorbed should give to one member of each family of deceased passengers who were sole bread earner of the family and were killed not for their faults but for the fault of the administration. They should be provided jobs at the earliest. With these words, I express my thanks to you.

[English]

SHRI A. CHARLES (Trivandrum): Our country has been passing through a period of agony during the last few years. Every morning, newspaper brings us very sad news of the killings of innocent people. Every day we see at least in some part of our country innocent lives being butchered. In the last three days, a number of accidents and disasters have happened and they are far too

heavy a package of disasters have happened and they are far too heavy a package of disasters for the nation to bear.

About the two accidents in the North Eastern Region of the railways, the Railway Minister himself has in his statement admitted that there is diabolical design to destabilise the entire region, because the same night the vital road bridge across the river Manas on the national highways was also blown up.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: That was in the photo. This is at the other end. That is the other one.

SHRI A. CHARLES: That is true. I am just mentioning because I feel that there is a planned sabotage throughout the country. The Bihar train fire near Patna is the most gruesome tragedy in recent times. I wonder how a gas cylinder which is prohibited in the passenger trains was there and how that was leaking and how the doors of the bogie were locked and if all these are merely accidents, it is a strange coincidence of accidents. A Janata Dal leader Shri Jabir Hussain has alleged that it was a sabotage as a leaking oxygen gas cylinder has been placed in the compartment. I am not going to repeat whatever my friends have said earlier. I am now coming to one or two very important points.

The whole nation wants to know the real cause of this gruesome tragedy and whether this is an accident or this is a sabotage. That we have to know.

The hon. Minister has ordered an inquiry. I do not cast any aspersion on any official of the railway competent to conduct inquiry. But in this particular case I feel because there is a doubt whether it is an accident or sabotage, only a judicial inquiry could convince the people about the real cause of the trouble. Only a judicial inquiry can reveal the whole truth.

Another factor which I want to bring to the kind notice of this House is about the

delay in giving proper treatment. That has not been mentioned by any other Members. There has been inordinate delay in giving proper treatment. That has not been mentioned by any other Member. There has been inordinate delay in giving proper treatment to these unfortunate then survivors who had been taken to the hospitals. There is a paper report which says that treatment of those injured in the disaster was delayed first because the doctors who were "on duty" had to be called from their residences and later on when they arrived, a large number of them were busy escorting the VIPs instead of caring for the people who were struggling for their lives. One single instance has been given here. One Shri Suresh Paswan who was brought to the NMC Hospital had to wait...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point that proper treatment was not given has already been made.

SHRI A. CHARLES: Apart from the journey time, he had to wait till a number of VIPs had to leave. So, in the inquiry I would like to know as to who are the doctors on duty on that day who were in their residences and not attending to their duties. How many VIPs were there? One report says that because of the crowding of the VIPs in the wards even breathing for the patients became difficult. We have to avoid that, in such a situation, VIPs can enquire about the matter instead of creating problem for them

Another allegation is that there was lack of medicines in the hospital. All these aspects will have to be inquired. The question whether smoking can be totally prohibited in the trains will also have to be considered.

Sir, the hon. Minister announced compensation double the amount usually given. Money is not a substitute for life. But still that is a big gesture. I would only request that whatever has been promised may kindly be given to the legal heirs. Regarding the Railways accident at Perumon more than half a dozen time I have brought it to the notice of the House and to the hon. Minister. This a

very important matter. Even in this Session also there was a Starred Question. The hon. Minister said that there are no pending cases. But last week also I sent him a representation. If my information is correct, there are about 17 cases which are still pending. I know of a particular case in my constituency Trivandrum. There is one Mr. K.O.Thomas. He lost his wife, mother-in-law and daughter. Compensation was given to the legal heirs of his mother-in-law and wife. For given him compensation in the case of this daughter's death, the Department is bargaining for Rs. 50,000 saying that he is not a dependent. I think the relevant provisions were amended but it was not given retrospective effect. But the hon. Railway Minister assured that though it has not been given retrospective effect, compensation would be give. I plead that whether he is a dependent or not compensation may be given to the next of kin of the deceased. I would just finish my speech with one humble request to that the whole nation may know what exactly has happened. My request is that a judicial probe must be instituted.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, barring one or two cases, the rest of the victims in this accident belong to my constituency. This train originates from Mokamah, a township in my constituency and before reaching Patna, it runs 85 kilometres through my constituency. Most of the hon. Members who are participating in this discussion might have come to know about the incident from newspaper reports, but I was present on the spot. On hearing the news, the hon. Minister of Railways immediately reached the site. Besides visiting the accident site alongwith the hon. Minister of Railways, I had also had the opportunity to visit the site separately. At the time of accident. I was sitting with the hon. Chief Minister of Bihar and as soon as I got the information, I rushed to the site of the accident. The hon. Chief Minister also rushed to the site of the accident immediately. Some of the hon. Members said that the presence of a large number of V.I.Ps at the site of accident created problem. But this is not correct. I was myself present on the spot. Mr.

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Deputy Speaker, Sir, it did not create any problem, rather V.I.Ps present at the scene helped in stepping up rescue operations and arrangement medicines immediately. Could the presence of V.I.Ps like the Chief Minister of Bihar and the hon. Minister of Railways create any problem? But it is absolutely wrong to say that their presence posed any obstruction. Rather their presence accelerated the pace of rescue operation. Shri Ram Dhan said that people travel without tickets. In this connection I would like to clarify that it is a daily passenger train the most of the passengers travelling in this train are season ticket holders. My place of residence falls on the route of this train and I must have travelled at least 1000 times up and down on this route. But I say with a heavy heart that the management of this train is not that good. I have brought these things to the notice of the hon. Minister of Railways when he reached Patna and when he was returning from there. I told him that fire in the train took place due to gas cylinder, and there is no doubt about it whatever its enquiry report might say. If an impartial enquiry is held, they will come to this conclusion only. This is the state of affairs in Bihar. You could hold an enquiry if you so wish. Welding gas cylinders are loaded in trains at Mughal Sarai Jn. on the Grand Ghord route and the cylinder are unloaded at various stations. In fact welding gas cylinders being used in the trains should be carried in trolleys separately. If a secret enquiry in this regard is held, the truth will come out that accident took place due to cylinder burst. Later also, we enquired from some persons and made enquiries through different sources, but gas cylinder was the only cause of this fire. Some people said that there was a door. It was a large compartment with six doors. The two doors at the centre were jammed because their handles had gone out of order. It has been a practice in the Railways that in case there is any trouble with the door it should be jammed. It is not a new phenomena. It has nothing to do with the term of office of Shri George Fernandes but this practice has been continuing for a long time. The daily passengers made innumer-

able complaints but little heed was paid to that. The train was coming westwards from Patna and inside the train a welding gas cylinder was kept near the two exists on the western side. The fire broke out from here. As a result, nobody could escape from that door and people were escaping from the exit on the eastern side. More than 100 to 125 people managed to come out. It was a large compartment. There was a misgiving that 2 coaches had caught fire. Only one coach caught fire and 171 persons were killed and 64 were injured. 25 people were discharged from hospital after first aid. Many people who could manage to jump off the train were saved. About 300 persons were travelling in that compartment. They were compelled to travel in this manner. The luggage also congested the compartment. I would like to draw your attention to another point. As regards the incident which took place yesterday, Shri George Fernandes visited the accident site and Members of the Railway Board were also present there. The General Manager of the Eastern Railways was also present and other people were also called. The D.M. of Danapur was on leave on account of some personal tragedy took place in his family. He was unable to come. Two patients died yesterday in a certain hospital on account of short supply of oxygen. It means that two more people died after the death of 71 or 72 people in the train incident. When the Press people of Patna approached. The General Manager of Eastern Railway to inform his that the hon. Minister of Railways has assured full medical aid to the injured and he had declared that air-conditioning facilities will be immediately provided for preserving the charred bodies and due pressure would be exerted in this regard. The doctors and the Members of the Railway Board assured the people in my presence that they would bear the entire expenditure. It was not possible to make arrangements for any gas in the hospital. The hospitals of Bihar are in a poor shape and their condition has been such for a very long time. The number of casualties exceeded the capacity of the hospital. Oxygen was in short supply. When the Press people approached the General Manager of Eastern Railway he

said that he did not want his name to be published in the newspaper and he would be going to Calcutta and he left for Calcutta. It was not only that arrangements were not made but they were met with ill-treatment as well. When the Superintendent was approached, his men treated them badly. It was like adding insult to injury. On one had people have died of burns, on the other ill-treatment was meted to them. It is a hair-raising incident in a way. The fire broke out a little ahead of Gulzar Bagh. People kept shouting but the trains could not be stopped due to the absence of alarm chain the continued to run for another 3 kms. in flame. However, the passengers sitting on the roof-top cut the hose pipes. Shri Ram Dahna was making fun of Bihar and he said that trains could be halted anywhere in Bihar. Hooligans are there not only in Bihar but they are present everywhere. Chains are not required to stop trains Alarm Chains are not required to stop a train in Bihar. It can be stopped by delinking the vacuum system also. This is a matter of serious thought. The people who were killed or injured seriously in the incident were known to me and some of them were my friends also and some were members of my party as well. One of our party leaders Shri Nawal Sharma also died in the incident. He had met me only a day before the incident when I was touring that part of my constituency where some huts and threshing places had caught fire, he was there with me for the whole day. Many of my friends were coming to meet me on that day. My point is that much negligence is there in regard to these local trains. You will be able to witness the condition of the passenger trains if you travel by them during a winter night. The trains running on this line do not have shutters, water and electricity. It is criminal neglect. Nobody checks the trains which are running on the Mokama-Danapur railway line. There are no arrangements for water, electricity in these trains. There are no arrangements for water, electricity in these trains. Even doors are missing. The door which stops working is sealed. This is the kind of step-motherly treatment meted out to the trains of that area.

The condition of Patna Suburban trains

is pitiable. I requested the hon. Minister of Railways repeatedly in this regard but it little heed was paid. This is the only train running in time in my area. Shri Ram Dhan does not have proper information in this regard. Alarm chain is not pulled in this train. Most of the people travelling by this train are white collared workers on their way to duty. Apart from that, poor people also board this train. The green-grocers and milkmen also board this train. There is no need to undertake checking because most of them are season ticket holders. There used to be 17 bogies in this train earlier but it has been reduced to 13. In this connection, I have requested the Minister of Railways to increase the number of bogies but little heed was paid to that. Alongwith it, it was also requested that the suburban trains running between Mokamah and Buxar should be converted into passenger trains and stopped at each halt station. The hon. Minister is requested to accept this demand. Efforts should also be made to reduce the over crowding in trains on that section.

The hon Minister of Railways while presenting the Railway Budget had declared a compensatory amount of Rs. 2 lakhs to the dependents of the victims of railway accidents. When the people yesterday went to meet the senior D.C.S. of Danapur Division who had been a favourite of Shri Madhav Rao Scindia, he stated in the presence of the Press persons there that he had not received any instructions regarding the doubling of the compensatory amount and only that much will be paid as instructed by the Railway Board. It is a matter of shame that the Members of the Railway Board and the hon. Minister should make certain announcements on visiting the spot but there is no follow-up. It has been reported as a main news-item in all the daily news papers published from Patna. I came to know about it from the people who have just arrived from Patna to Bihar Bhavan. My point is that after such a major accident the General Manager of the Eastern Railways should play this kind of a role that when the Press representatives enquire about the arrangements regarding the oxygen cylinder, he would ignore the

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matter and go away by saying that he does not want his name to be published in the newspaper and the attendants of patients are lathicharged and when the question of paying due compensation arises he would say that the assurance of the Railway Minister has little value and he would do whatever the Railway Board has instructed. This is the whole situation.

I would like to praise Shri George Fernandes for the fact that when I was with the Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Lalu Prasad Yadav at the accident site, I had said that the hon. Railway Minister would be reaching there within the next 3 to 4 hours and he arrived within 4 to 5 hours of the incident. On one hand, this is the kind of sympathy displayed by the hon. Minister and the behaviour of the officials of the Railway Department offers a complete contrast. Therefore, I would like to draw the attention of the House towards this point. In regard to the dead victims I would like to make an appeal that since the Railway Tribunal may take quite a long time to decide the quantum of claims because many factors, such as how much he would have earned had he remained alive for a certain number of years and so on have to be taken into account, a uniform amount of Rs. 2 lakhs should be paid to the dependents of each dead person. Secondly, at least one person of such families should be provided with employment in the Railways depending on his qualifications. Adequate arrangements should be made to provide proper medical treatment to all the injured and an amount of Rs. 50 thousand to Rs. 1 lakh should be paid to each injured person in the shape of ex-gratia payment so that they are able to lead their lives properly because there will be many injured, who will not be capable to work any more and their limbs will have little strength.

I would like to draw the attention towards the causes of the accident. When the gas started leaking, many passengers were not able to escape and they became unconscious. It is to be investigated as to how

people became unconscious and failed to escape from the place. Many of them became unconscious. Two people lost their sight and arrangements should be made for specialised treatment for them. Arrangements should be made for granting compensation and stringent action should be taken against the officials who have been shirking their duties. Necessary improvements should be brought about in the suburban train facilities.

Along with it, I would like to express my deep concern on the incident and my sympathies are with the deceased. I would like to express gratefulness towards the hon. Minister of Railways that he reached the accident site within 4 to 5 hours of the accident for an on the spot inspection and expressed his deep sympathies to the affected people.

With these words, I would like to thank you for giving me time. Thank you.

SHRIJANARDAN YADAV (Godda): Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, I saw the incident on the 16th with my own eyes. The Mokamah-Ara Shuttle train caught fire at 9.45 A.M. and I was there at 10.30 A. M. It was an extremely painful sight. It is not that passengers in Bihar travel without tickets as hon. Shri Ram Dhan said. The fact is that due to shortage of train services in Bihar, large number of people are using the limited space available. About 200 people occupy the space which is meant for 50 people. Government offices open at 10.30 a.m. there and the Mokamah-Ara Shuttle train suits the employees. The welding gas cylinder was loaded onto the train at Patna City where railway officials failed to check it. The train reached Gulzarbagh where the cylinder started leaking. It had not even reached Rajendra Halt when the bogies caught fire. There was a stampede inside the coaches as people were shouting and trying to get out but they were unable to come out as the doors were closed.

I had the opportunity to witness another such incident in Bihar in 1982.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is not

much time. There are other hon. Members also who want to speak.

SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: I demand an immediate solution to the commuting difficulties being faced by people in the different regions of Bihar. There has been no improvement in the attitude of railway officials and employees working at Danapur. There has to be an improvement in the way passengers are being treated. The next-of-kin of the dead should be paid should be paid a compensation of Rs. 2 lakh. I also saw a woman and her child dying of burns. The child could not even be separated from its mother. People who become handicapped on partially burnt in the accident should get a minimum compensation of Rs. 1 lakh. Keeping all these things in mind, I urge the hon. Railway Minister to provide metro-train facility in Patna.

[English]

SHRISONTOSH MOHANDEV (Tripura West): Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, today we are discussing one of the saddest railway accidents that has happened in the recent times. In the past, when serious accidents of this nature used to happen, we have seen that Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned and Prof. Madhu Dandavate offered himself to resign. Many of the subsequent Ministers have not resigned. The frequency of railway accidents are so many. I would not like Mr. George Fernandes to resign but I would like to know one thing. In his statement, he has said that an inquiry has been ordered. Such inquiries, by the Railway Commission, had been ordered in the past also. For our information, would you kindly let us know as to how many people had been pinned as guilty and how many people, amongst those officers, had been punished? There were two or three Commissions of Inquiry during the last one year. In this case, we have seen that an administrative inquiry has been ordered by the Chief Minister and a Commission of Inquiry by the Railway Accident Officer of the Railways. Is it that they are not co-operating with each other or that they have not decided about the area to be covered by

the State Government and the Commission of Inquiry? I would not like to repeat all those points already said by various Members. But the confusion has come in the mind of the traveller as to whether it is a fact that the Railways have discontinued the system of alarm. There was a time when Railway Ministers used to say that the alarm chains were misused to stop the trains, not to stop at the scheduled railway station but midway, according to the pleasure and convenience of the business people and commuters. Has this view led the Railways to withdraw the system of alarm chain? According to your statement, the incident has happened at 9.40 AM and according to come other people, it is 10.12 AM. The difference is one hour and twelve minutes. 70 to 80 people have been killed. But the hon. Member from that area has said that 300 people were travelling and about 100 people have been killed and 72 injured. When I was working in the Estimates Committee, we went round to examine the Railways. Everywhere we got complaints that there was shortage of trains for the daily commuters. Trains used to be crowded. Compartments with a capacity of only 100 people used to carry 300 people, some people travelling on the roof tops. It happens in Bombay, Patna, Calcutta and everywhere. According to the Press, there was another train, Capital Express which was suspended as you yourself in your Railway Budget have introduced some new trains. And hence, some local trains have been suspended. It is good to look after the interest of the long-distance passengers. But at the same time, do not forget that in every region, there are village people and ordinary people who cannot afford to stay in the city and who live in the outskirts of the city, some 10 to 15 kms. a way from the city doing some small business like selling milk and vegetables. They daily come to the town to sell their products and go back. I am not making any allegation, but I would request that a review should be undertaken by the Railway Board to assess the requirement of these daily passengers, who come to cities like Patna and to find out whether sufficient trains and facilities are there for them. If you do not do that, such

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[Sh. Sontosh Mohan Dev]

accidents are bound to take place. As was mentioned, vegetables and milk cans were kept near the doors of the bogies, which blocked the passage. Now, you have started a safety week and will continue with this practice. I welcome this step, but it must also be found whether those entrusted with the responsibility of doing jobs in the railway are really doing their job, and whether they are getting the cooperation of the passengers in that from the safety point of view. Once when I was travelling between Sealdah and Burdwan, I saw a railway officer, who wanted to do the job entrusted to him, but he was prevented and was beaten and consequently, he could not do justice with the job entrusted to him. This is another aspect. While we know that all types of people travel in the trains, but at the same time, we must ensure that the railway staff get the right atmosphere to work. The passengers and the railway employees must have a situation to work properly. It is not there at present. It is no use blaming the railway employees or the passengers of Bihar only. It is all over the country. Score of persons travel without tickets. Only it may differ in degree in various parts of the country.

When the Railways undertake any survey for train, they only take into account the earnings that would accrue from such a train. That will be brought before the Railway Board to decide whether a train is justified or not. The requirements of the people and persons travelling there must also be taken into consideration. I have seen these things myself as co-Chairman of the Estimates Committee. I do not think, Shri Ram Dhan wanted to say anything against anybody. We should also, as Members of Parliament, take the responsibility to apprise the public that ticketless travelling must be stopped and unless that is done, it will be very difficult to solve many of the problems.

I would not repeat the points made by other hon. Members. I would only like to ask one clarification. In your statement, you have said that you have doubled the amount of

compensation. Is it that you have made it now Rs. 2 lakhs instead of Rs. 1 lakh? What is it that you have doubled? I saw in the newspapers that the Chief Minister has announced the payment of Rs. 10000 and he has requested you to enhance the compensation amount to Rs. 2 lakhs. Kindly clarify this.

Another point is with regard to the passengers travelling with cylinders etc. I must say that something very drastic needs to be done. Once when I was travelling from Gauhati to Lumding, I saw that even cooking gas was there in the train. There is need for some drastic punishment for such people. Why should the rules in this regard not be enforced strictly? Just advice would not do in this regard.

Lastly, according to the newspaper reports, the doctors at the hospitals were busy attending to the VIPs instead of attending the victims of this accident. I do not want to go into this, but I would make one suggestion with all seriousness that the Railways should go into certain arrangements with the hospitals nearer to the various railway stations. Here, it seems that there was shortage of medicines. You had gone by air. If there was shortage of medicines, why did they not inform the Railway Board here? They could have rushed the medicines.

One of the Members referred to tow passengers who received major injuries and who died in the hospital yesterday. I request that some officer from the Centre should go there and see that proper treatment is given to those who were injured in the accident and if necessary for the sake of proper treatment, shift them to some better hospital either in Calcutta or Delhi because I do not think that proper facilities are available either at Patna or Danapur. So, before some more person die, if there is shortage of medicine, you supply them with adequate medicine and if there is a need to shift them to better hospital, you please see to it.

Though I said earlier that the Railway Minister should resign, I don't want him to

resign but he should try to fix some moral responsibility on someone who is responsible for this accident and not scapegoat. Somebody at some stage has to be held responsible for it. Since the Minister is resigning, does not mean that others should be scott free. Ministers are always privileged people, they will not resign

[Translation]

SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI (Domariaganj). Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir the House has expressed its deep grief over this tragic railway accident I am extremely grateful to the hon Railway Minister and the Chief Minister of Bihar for acting promptly in reaching the spot immediately and giving directions to help the affected. A number of Points were raised in the discussion of which the most important was one related to local trains passengers trains which are used by the poor people. These trains have been neglected by the Railways. These trains lack proper lighting and seating facility and the coaches are in a rundown condition. We read in newspapers that fights often break out among passengers as the coaches are overcrowded. Most of the space is occupied by green grocess and renders which makes movement very restricted. Inflammable articles are prohibited in rail coaches but in Bihar carrying of such articles is a common practice. So I request the hon Railway Minister to provide a special police force for the Railways. Men from the G R P are sent to the Railways on deputation but their duties are limited to encouraging unauthorized renders to ply their trade and extortion of money. With the result that security of passengers which is their responsibility is ignored. Complaints have been received that they have links with criminals who loot trains.

SHRI RAM DHAN (Lalganj) They have links with politicians also

SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI That of course is always there. If the local police had been vigilant such people could have been punished. Unauthorised passengers enter the 2-Tier and 3 Tier coaches and bribes the

TTE Rs 10 or Rs. 20 and occupy any available space the police remains a mere spectator even there is every possibility of unauthorized chain-pulling and luggage thefts in such situations. Incidents like these show the callousness of Railway officials. Therefore, the Railway Minister should take this matter very seriously. Bureaucracy prevails in the Railway Ministry. No rules or laws are followed in any matter. Rules are only enforced over poor people. The Railways provide facilities to their own employees and others. But there has been a reduction in the number of passenger trains and shuttle trains. I want the Railway Administration to think seriously on this matter. The number of people living in the suburbs is increasing because of housing shortage in the cities. People living in such places have to commute to and fro the city everyday. So the number of superfast trains should be reduced and the number of passenger and shuttle trains should be increased. Also such trains should not be provided with rejected bogies. Full Police force should be deployed on these trains to prevent dacoity and theft of diesel and kerosene oil. Such maladministration on the part of the Railways should be checked. This is all I want to say.

SHRI SATYNARAYAN JATIYA (Ujjain) Deputy Speaker Sir, the Mokamah-Patna railway accident shows certain defects in our administrative machinery. If there is no timely rectification of these defects the results can be very serious.

Without an alarm chain it becomes virtually impossible for passengers to stop the train. It is said that trains are stopped again and again if the alarm chain is present. There are certain laws for this purpose. If some one pulls the chain without valid reason then the person is punished. If the absence of alarm chains leads to accidents it creates a fear psychosis among people and discourages them from further travel. Presence of the alarm chain can reduce the number of such accidents.

It was cylinder leakage that caused the fire. But why was the cylinder allowed to be

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[Sh. Satyanarayan Jatiya]

carried in the train and how were so many people allowed to board the train? This means that there are loopholes in the system. I want to compare this incident with another incident which occurred recently. 23 tankers of Naphthalene were burnt together which is a major accident. One tanker can carry 66,240 liters of chemical. The raging fire could be seen from a distance of 25-30 kilometres. The nearby localities were also affected. Sir, you may say that I should speak on the accident in particular. I am emphasizing the need for safety. Be it a cylinder or a tanker if there had not been any leakage the accident would not have occurred. This has endangered the lives of thousands of people living in the neighbourhood. You may have heard the name of Union Carbide.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Hon. Member, there is no time for such detail. Please come to the point.

SHRI SATYANARAYAN JATIYA: May I remind you that all major accidents are caused by negligence. This aspect should be considered. The hon. Minister may be an extremely knowledgeable person when it comes to the Railways and he may even be sympathetic towards these problems but this is not enough. Such accidents will recur if there is no improvement in the railway's administrative machinery. Things like provision of drinking water, well-fitted doors and windows, alarm-chain and setting up stalls at railway stations may seem minor but they matter much. So these points should be looked into.

Dependents of people who die in rail accidents or the wounded are given compensation. More than 100 people were affected in this rail accident but no attention is being paid to them. 13 of those have been paid a compensation of Rs. 250 only. Nobody is bothered about the more than 100 people who have been admitted in hospitals. The administration and the people have lost

more than Rs. 5 crores. Huts belonging to labourers were burnt. The plats on which poles are fixed were broken and the tanker discs were crown 100 metres away from the site of the accident. Even this was not noticed by railway officials and it was the people who pointed this out. If small things are taken care of then we can protect the life and property of people. The people who have been affected in the Nagda accident should also be given compensation.

[English]

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat): Sir, I share the pain, anguish and grief of the hon. Minister of Railways, which permeates the statement he has made yesterday. He has correctly explained that it is not only a tragedy, but that it is a macabre tragedy. This explains the feelings which he has got regarding this tragic incident.

But I think it is not enough for him just to express pain, grief and sorrow. He has got to do something today. It is not a question of his resigning. He has to do something more. When I say something more, it means that he should see that this kind of a macabre tragedy does not ever recur. There should be a proper guarantee for the safety and security of the passengers.

I have got certain speeches made by him, wherein he has given the topmost priority, in the administration of Railways, for security and safety measures. I hope he will abide by that commitment made to the House. This accident also reminds me of the tragic situation which prevails in the suburban railways. I am also a regular commuter on the suburban railways. What has happened in this particular case may happen in any suburban railway, either in Calcutta or in any other place. Therefore, I would suggest that in order to see that this kind of a macabre tragedy does not ever repeat itself, it is necessary to make improvements in the Railway Administration. But, unfortunately, the Railway Minister is on record to say that the suburban railways are not remunerative, and that they are highly subsidized. I think it

is not a question of giving subsidy. It is a question of the safety and security of a large number of our commuters. So, without making any more points, I would once again urge upon him to see that improvements on the suburban railways are made, to ensure that this kind of a macabre incident does not ever take place in any part of the country.

I again come to the question of safety measures. I am told by some knowledgeable persons that the Research, Design and Standards Organization of the Indian Railways now at Lucknow, has devised certain very modern safety measures. Their complaint is that instead of utilizing those devices, Railways are very much interested in importing some safety devices from foreign countries. I would also mention some of them. They are: Auxiliary Warning System; CATP; Hot Box Detector; Last Vehicle Check and Level Crossing Warning Devices and SSI devices.

This is the result of our indigenous R&D. This has been achieved by RDSO. Why are not those devices being used in the railways for the safety of our railway system? I hope the Railway Minister will give proper attention to this aspect.

So far as financial constraints are concerned, it is a regular complaint. But there is some substance in it. I find that there is a larger allocation for signalling and safety in the Eighth Five Year Plan; it is Rs. 2125 crore. But the amount spent on these safety measures during the Seventh Five Year Plan was only Rs. 454 crore. Therefore, the financial constraint should not hold at bay the other safety measures which are very much necessary for the protection of the railway commuters.

An enquiry has been ordered by the CRS. It is beyond question; it is beyond doubt. There is a report that the Commissioner of Railway Safety has been brought into disrepute because of the accident which took place in Kerala. He might be knowing that CRS has invented a theory of Toner which the Expert Committee has punctured

wholly; it has suggested something more. Therefore, it is not wise to rely on CRS. I think some other mechanism ought to be resorted to so that there may be a proper enquiry into the causes which have led to this tragedy in the words of the Railway Minister.

It has been my experience also, that there is a long delay in the payment of compensation the Railway Compensation Tribunal. I think, in this particular case, Government should take all steps to see that the compensation is paid as early as possible; and if it is paid early, then it is a great achievement.

There are two aspects of this tragedy. (1) There are pre-accident circumstances; (2) there are post-accident circumstances. I think there should be two enquiry committees. One should fix the responsibility about the accident in the train; the second committee should see what particular steps have been taken whether there are shortcomings in attending to those who were been killed and those injured.

SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM (Salem): This is one of the worst tragedies we have ever seen in the railways. In 1989, there were 556 railway mishaps, according to the present Railway Minister. There was a death toll of 142. This is the fourth month. I think we would be matching that figure very soon. It does not speak well of railway safety at all. This accident has taken a very heavy death toll. The initial statement made by the hon. Minister in this House may be based on very little information received by him, wherein he had mentioned that 30 people had passed away. Then he amended it to 71. Now we understand that two or three more persons have passed away. If we go on counting like this, we may reach a century. The issue is not only how many have died; the issue is how they have died. The issue is very serious because they had been burnt in a closed chamber, almost roasted alive and finally charred beyond recognition. It is something which is a terrible sight.

[Sh. P.R. Kumaramangalam]

19.00 hrs.

I had the opportunity in my own personal experience to see charred bodies, of course, of near and dear ones-but I am quite sure that the hon. Minister after visiting the spot would have realised how terrible it must be for the relatives to go and identify the bodies and separate them. I understand that 19 of these still not have been identified. It was that bad a situation.

And what was it born off. It was born out of a smile fact that we were careless enough to allow inflammable material, explosives to be kept in a passenger train, in passenger compartment. If the cylinder did not burst, it contained either oxygen or acetylene, it is obvious that it had leaked. Anybody who knows a minimum of things would tell you. And I am sure that the hon. Minister knows very well that this is most probably what happened. The Minister has been kind enough to inform us that the Commissioner of Railway Safety will enquire into the matter and I understand that the Chief Minister has said that there would be an administrative inquiry. I wish to go on record to say that both of these will be insufficient. The Commissioner of Railway Safety has a very unsavory record, to say the least. I do not mean specifically against any individual, but the tornado theory which they had projected got their credibility down to the minimum. By and large it is impossible to imagine that a huge train was picked up by a tornado, hit only the bridge near Trivandrum and picked up only the bridge! Even the rails were in form!

AN HON. MEMBER: It hit only the train.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: But they had the courage to sell that theory! What really matters is they had the courage to advance such a theory which was really shocking for the. And if it is the organisation, may not be the same individual, through it is the same organisation, if it is going to be relied on to enquire, to find out whether this was a fire from a cylinder or not, who knows,

he might talk of a meteorite having hit the coach! That might be his new theory. From tornado he would go to outer space.

I will not take too much time. Deputy-Speaker is already warning me with his eyes.

But the issue that comes up i.e. is the Railway Minister satisfied that the authority has the credibility to convince the nation as a whole that the real reason for the explosion has been X or Y cause. Even now, if he turns around to say that it is the cylinder, it is quite possible that people will say that they are saying about the cylinder to cover up an electrical short circuit or something else. Because, the railway experts who looked into the tornado question said that the tornado reason was given only to cover up railway employees faults. I wish to emphasise this. Then hon. Minister realises that people would like to know that for over nearly 100 deaths what was the cause of the death?

Secondly, it is shocking to know that out of four doors three did not open and they never could be opened earlier. That means our coaches are in that terrible condition. Who is going to be responsible for this?

Shri Chitta Babu had made a critical mention about the RDSO's recommendations. One of the recommendations was about the hot box detection unit. Another recommendation was a fire alarm system especially in a passenger train. Why was the fire alarm system not there in a passenger train? Why did they not put it in the train? Why was the chain not there or why was it not working? Why was it necessary that a man at the level crossing had to find out from outside that the coach is burning and inform the station in advance? If this is the situation, I do not know what is to be done.

I do not want to ask for the resignation of the Railway Minister because after a long time we have today a trade union leader as the Railway Minister; unfortunately the tradition has been that Ministers would resign. Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned in his own

time. May be, we could find some of the reasons why he should not resign. But the normal tradition has been that.

Firstly, more allocation of funds should be given to Railway safety. Secondly, better amenities have to be provided specially in suburban trains, where people travel for short distances and large number of people travel in coaches. Thirdly, at least ensure that there are enough coaches in suburban trains. Do not reduce the number of coaches.

I would only like to say, the whole House, irrespective of which party we belong to, joins the Minister, as he says the railway men are his family, in expressing our grief and conveying our condolence to the bereaved families. Also we hope, over a period of time at least the hon. Railway Minister and his family, railway men, would ensure that the passengers do not suffer at the hands of fate in this manner.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU (Balasore): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, my desire is not to inflict a speech on you or the Railway Minister. I am just standing here to express my deep sense of grief and join with the Members of the House to express how sad we are when such a horrible tragedy took place.

I also join the Minister who said: 'I am still reeling under the magnitude of the tragedy and sufferings caused.'

To me this is not a traditional or conventional type of accident. There has been no bomb explosion, no derailment, no collusion. But still something has happened, in which about seventy or eighty passengers have died.

Sir, I would like to make one or two points. It is good that our Minister was there; the Chief Minister was there and the medical team and others had reached as quickly as possible. But it indicates the horrible life of the passengers of the local trains. It exposes the bad conditions of the local trains. They are over crowded. They do not actually look

live railway compartments where commuters can travel. Along with the passengers goats and cows are taken. They are badly over crowded. Can you do something for it? I agree with Mr. Ram Dhan that a passenger should buy a ticket. Even if he buys the ticket, what can he do when there is no room for him to stay there, to stand on his own legs, is a problem, what to speak of a seat. This is one thing. I would request the Minister to look into the horrible conditions of the trains, particularly local trains.

An enquiry has been ordered. I would like to know, who had kept the cylinder and to whom the cylinder belonged to. If that is identified, it will reveal lot of information.

I had written to the Minister that some of such troubles were caused at the Howrah station by some people, railway staff and the police. The police and some of the railway employees also cause the breach of the Railway Rules. So, it will be known as to who brought this cylinder and who had kept it and how it caught fire.

Sir, already the compensation has been ordered. I feel that the poor guard who first noticed the fire and informed the railway authorities to stop the train has not been taken care of. Perhaps he had not given the right warning at the right time, more people would have lost their lives. I would like the Guard also to be rewarded. It has been said that Minister's ex-gratia payment will not be made. I do not agree with it. If it is a problem as it is put here, then I will request the Minister to see that ex-gratia payments are made within a week's time if they are not already made. It will discount all suspicion that there will be delay in payment of the compensation money.

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri Ishwar Chaudhary, I would like to inform you that we have serious constraint of time and a number of Members are still waiting for their turn to speak. Please try to avoid repetition of point which have already been made in the

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House and if you have any new points to make, you are allowed to speak.

SHRI ISWHAR CHAUDHARY(Gaya): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this heart-rending accident has deeply grieved all of us. Railway coaches rendered unserviceable on other sections of the Railways are used for maintaining train service on this section and the railway lines too are in bad shape. The Department of Railways knows that such coaches do not have facilities of light, water and fan, etc. That is why these coaches are pressed into service on neglected railways lines. You might be aware that a discussion was held in this House about a train accident in which a passenger train packed to the capacity fell into an overflowing river in Bihar and thousands of passengers lost their lives. Despite the matter having been discussed in the House, nobody was given any compensation whatsoever. Was any action taken by the House in the matter? This Sort of incident is not an unusual thing in Bihar where people with the connivance of police are often found carrying gas cylinders, kerosene, diesel or petrol canes in the compartments, endangering the lives of the passengers. With the help of money-power, one can do anything there. The police is ever ready to lend a helping hand to persons doing such illegal acts, provided their palms are adequately greased. Thefts of railways properties take place under the protection of armed police. The police system is ridden with corruption and has been rendered ineffective. Besides problems of light, fan and drinking water in the passenger trains, there is yet another problem of travelling by passengers on the roofs of compartments by passengers due to non-availability of room for them in the train coaches. Why passengers are forced to travel on roofs? When a request is made to Railways to provide additional coaches, they express their inability by saying that they do not have resource to meet this demand. I myself have demanded for a double railway line from Gaya to Patna a number of times. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the condition is so bad there that in case of an accident, no alternative line is available to maintain train service on that section. Therefore, I would

like to request that arrangement should be made for doubling the said line. One more thing, what steps have been taken to ascertain as to how many members from each family have died in this accident? I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether compensation will be given for all if six members of a single family have died? Compensation is given for the loss of life of not more than one or two members of a family. It is very easy to identify the affluent persons dying in railway accidents as they often get their seats reserved. Will the hon. Minister take personal interest in finding out the identity of the poor who died in this accident so that compensation could be given to the families of those helpless victims? After all it is your declared policy to provide relief to the poor. If the deceased happened to be the sole bread earner of his family, in that case what arrangement your Ministry is going to make to look after his family? Are you going to provide employment to one member of each such family or in case there are no vacancies in the Department of Railway, are you considering to absorb them in other departments? These points require serious consideration. It is very regretful that we consider the matter only after occurrence of the tragedy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will not take much time. I would like to elucidate those things only which have been raised in the House.

From my personal experience as an ordinary passenger in trains. I can say that majority of the passengers travel on tickets without reservation because prior to my becoming a Member of Parliament, I also used to travel like this. In the absence of reserved tickets, it will be very difficult for the railway administration to identify the victims of the accident and find out the exact number thereof. Under such circumstances the hon. Minister is requested to take the number of tickets issued at various stations for travelling in that train and that of season tickets into account for arriving at the approximate number of death toll in the accident.

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MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: These things we have already discussed in the Rail Budget. Now you please wind up your speech.

SHRI ISHWAR CHAUDHARY: I am talking about the post accident situation. With these words, I request the hon. Minister to provide maximum possible compensation to the victims. I would request you to convey my condolences to the bereaved families.

SHRI TEJ NARAYAN SINGH (Buxar): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is one of the worst tragedies in the history of Indian Railways. Three different major accidents took place at three different places on 16th of the month, first, three hundred jhuggies were reduced to ashes in an incident of fire in Delhi, the capital of the country, second, one hundred persons died after consuming poisoned food in Basti District of Uttar Pradesh and third, a rail-accident occurred at 9.50 hours on Mokamah-Danapur Division. This accident claimed a large number of human lives, stern action must be taken against the guilty employees whose negligence caused this accident. It is true that alarm chain was not there in the train. It is not only this particular train did not have the chain, but many other important passenger trains do not have alarm chain facility. It is not so that these facilities have been lacking for the last five months only, but infact they have been lacking for the last so many years and it will take time to improve the situation because if one goes by the present trend of railway employees, they are only interested in minting money by way of selling railway goods. They least care for maintenance of railway lines or train coaches for which they are paid for. Such malpractices in Railways can be checked only if the hon. Minister takes strict measures to root out corruption prevailing from top to bottom in the Railways Department.

A major chunk of revenues earned by the Railways is pocketed by the corrupt officials and that is why Railways have been running in losses. There will be no shortage of funds with the Railways to lay new railways lines if pilferages of railway properties

are checked.

I would like to demand that compensation of rupees two lakh for each of the deceased as also employment to atleast one member of each family of victims be given. An amount of Rupees fifty thousand be paid to each injured person in addition to medical assistance which is required to be given urgently. Bihar is already lacking railway facilities. The number of passenger trains are not adequate therefore, number of passenger trains should be increase in order to avoid overcrowding in trains and check the menace of travelling on the roof of trains. With these words, I conclude.

SHRIMATI VIDYA CHENNUPATI (Vijaywada): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not want to make repetition of what has already been said but I would like to utilise the time given by you for making some suggestions. I would like to request the hon. Minister of Railways through you that an enquiry should be ordered to know as to who had kept the cylinder in the compartment. If it is a normal feature in Bihar to carry gas cylinders in the passenger trains, a separate van can be attached to passenger trains for this purpose on the pattern of break van which is attached to trains for carrying luggage of the passengers. Today, it seems that entire country is on fire. Every now and then incidents of fire are being reported from one or the other places. Close on the heels of these fire incidents, terrorist violence has become daily feature of our life. The Government has very promptly announced a compensation of Rupees two lakh to the family of each of the victims but no amount of money can possible compensate the loss of human life? Have you thought of what will be the fate of the widows of those victims? Rail accidents have been taking place since the very beginning, but have we ever tried to find out the causes for it? Have we ever made efforts to know as to whether accidents cause due to out faulty technique or family railway sleepers? I do not want to say anything else since you are an experienced Minister but I would like to request you to increase the amount of compensation to two lakh as is being de-

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[Smt. Vidya Chennupati]

manded by all the members of the House and jobs should be provided to the dependants of those persons who have lost their lives in this accident. Being a woman, I feel that today no one feels secure once he or she steps out of the house as every mode of transport has become equally risky and dangerous. It may be possible to abandon travelling by air to some extent, but can we do without rails also? Today, the technology has advanced to such an extent that there is a solution ready for each and every problem. It is not the concern of only this House, but of the entire humanity and the nation also to think ways and means to prevent menace of railway accidents. I am thankful to you for giving me a chance to express my views.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Bombay North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I express my deep sense of grief and convey my condolence to all the deceased and injured persons in this accident and with that I would like to make three suggestions as well.

My first suggestion is that a monthly dole of rupees one thousand should be given to the families of all those persons who have been killed or who have become handicapped in this accident pending the award of compensation by the Railway Compensation Tribunal in order to save the families from hardships. It is a well known fact that the tribunals take a lot of time ranging from 6 months to two years in disposing of the cases of compensation claims.

Secondly, I would like to say something about the accident that took place in Malad, Bombay. I had personally gone to meet those thirty seven persons who received serious injuries in the accident. Out of them, two persons did not receive the ex-gratia payment of rupees seven hundred fifty as they were inside the operation theatre when the officials had one to disburse the money to the injured persons. This is an instance which shows that ex-gratia payment is not made to all the victims. It is, therefore, requested to review all those cases in which

ex-gratia payments have not been made and responsibility should be fixed for non-payment of ex-gratia amount.

Thirdly, although I personally don't agree with it, but in the light of prevailing circumstances in the country, possibility of planting the cylinder by the terrorists could not be ruled out completely. This can be revealed only after an inquiry is held. My suggestion is that we should tighten the security of railways tracks and the trains. This will help in reducing the number of accidents taking place due to lack of proper security. I would like to quote a small incident. The other day when I went to New Delhi railway Station to board Rajdhani Express to go to Malad where an accident took place three days ago, I found that there were no ticket collectors at the gates of the coaches of the train to Check tickets, etc. This was the state of affairs at New Delhi Jn. Therefore, I would like to say that we can fight terrorism only by stepping up alertness and vigilance. It is considered necessary, the Government should make separate security arrangements for trains as Railway Protection Force may not be in a position to meet the security needs alone. And if necessary, Government should take the services of the Border Security Force or any other Forces for this purpose. This is my suggestion to the hon. Minister.

Lastly, I would like to repeat once again that the families of all the victims should be given monthly dole pending the award of the Tribunal. It will be great relief to the bereaved families. This is all I have to say in this regard.

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI (Kota): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also join my colleagues in expressing deep concern over this tragic accident. However, I would like to give few suggestion to ensure that this kind of a macabre incident does not take place in any part of the country in future.

During the last one month I raised a number of questions in the House with regard to the miserable conditions prevailing in Western Railway. I would like to inform you

that three accidents, two of goods train and the other one of a passenger train have taken place in Ratlam Division of Western Railway during a period of last one month. Only six days ago, wagons, containing naphtha of a goods trains derailed, due to which two kilometres railway track was uprooted and as many as seventy person received injuries. Railways have introduced some new non-stop passenger trains like Rajdhani Express and some goods trains which stop only at very limited number of stations. In my opinion, these trains will not be successful unless proper attention is paid to the maintenance of track and bridges, etc. I would like to invite the hon. Minister's kind attention to Kota railways bridge which has outlived its life-span. I have taken up this issue with the railway authorities from time to time, yet no step has been taken to do the needful. My request to the hon. Minister is that we should take necessary action well in time so as to prevent any major accident.

Secondly, I would like to say that it is no longer possible for the passengers to travel on the roof of the trains after electrification on Western Railway. As a result the compartments have become fore more overcrowded as the number of coaches remains the same. Therefore I would like to request the hon. Minister increase the number of trains. Efforts should be made to avoid the kind of accidents that took place which brought a bad name to the country. With these words, I conclude.

SHRI RAMESHWAR PRASAD (Arrah): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I totally agree with Shri Neetish Kumar who explained about the miserable condition of local trains running on that section. *Corruption is so rampant that the corrupt railway officials and the police are allowing highly inflammable materials like gas cylinders in passenger trains in violation of all rules and regulation of the Railways.*

Second thing I would like to pinpoint is that although the Fire Fighting Station and the N.M.C.H. Hospital were not very far from the place of accident, yet the superintendent

of the hospital reached the hospital two and a half hours after the injured were brought to the hospital. It shows his callous attitude toward the injured persons. No only this, even the fire Brigade took half an hour to reach the place of accident. it proves beyond doubt that they took the accident lightly very. The injured persons had to reach the hospital on their own as there were no arrangements of transportation from the authorities side. State officials and the Railway officials are passing the buck to each-other for certain lapses. Even after the assurance of the hon. Minister, the railway authorities and N.M.C.H. officials are not taking due interests. As far as the security of public is concerned, much is left to be desired.

In order to hold an impartial enquiry, judicial inquiry should be ordered into this matter. Moreover, I would like to suggest that one member of the family of each victim should be given employment no matter whether the deceased was a farmer or a government prevent. As far as distribution of compensation is concerned, the Member of Parliament or the legislator of that particular area should be authorised to certify as to who should be paid compensation. Pending award of compensation, an ad-hoc amount of rupees one thousand a month should be given to those bereaved families. With these words, I take my seat.

SHRI M.S.PAL(Nainital): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of regret that incident unseemly and reprehensible have taken place. I request the hon. Minister of Railways to take necessary action against those who did not discharge their duty sincerely. Sir, the condition of passenger trains is poor.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do not repeat this point.

[Translation]

SHRI M.S. PAL: I would not take much time. I will conclude within the time allotted to

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[Sh. M.S. Pal]

me. There is no arrangement of even water and electricity and due to this people do not like to purchase tickets. The condition is bad there. On the one hand, prestigious trains have been introduced with arrangements of food on board and on the other hand there are no proper arrangements to issue tickets.

I request the hon. Railways Minister to constitute a separate board with the objective of improving the conditions as well as to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

SHRI DASAI CHOWDHARY (Rosera): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would not take more than a minute to make my point. First of all, I would like to mention the miserable plight of rail services in Bihar, of which the hon. Railways Minister is also well aware of, as he is associated with that State. It is true that everyday welding gas cylinders and cooking gas cylinders are transported by trains from one place to another and this is done with the connivance of the G.R.P. and the railways employees. Therefore, first of all, I would like to demand a ban on this.

Secondly, I would like to say that defective bogies from other States are attached to the trains operating in Bihar, when they are no more in running condition. Therefore, please do not attach such bogies to the trains operating in Bihar.

Thirdly, I would like to say that as many people have died in this incident, their dependents would get compensation and they might also get employment, but when people die in small train mishap, their dependents do not get compensation. Therefore, I would like to request the Government to initiate a Passenger Insurance Scheme so that some payment apart from the compensation is given to the bereaved families for their sustenance.

With these words, I would like to thank you for giving me time to speak and I hope that the hon. Railway Minister would pay special attention to the deteriorating

condition of railways in Bihar, so that there is improvement in the functioning of railways.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the statement that I gave yesterday on the accident, I had expressed my agony as well as that of the Railway department. I agree with the hon. Members that the condition of railways in Patna is bad. I saw it myself when we went there day before yesterday. But before making any point, I would like to clarify one or two things. Firstly, the hon. Member from Patna said with reference to this accident that two bogies were burnt. In fact, only one bogie was burnt and not two. Secondly, many hon. Members tried to point out that an effort was made to hide the actual number of casualties. The telephonic information that I received in my office, while coming to the House was also included in the statement that I gave in the House regarding the two train accidents. I was told on the telephone that there were 30 casualties. When I was going out of the House, I was told that the number of casualties was not 30, but a little less. As there is no definite information regarding the number of people admitted to different hospitals, the information is still incomplete. When the incident took place at 9.30, the people were taken out of the charred bogies and were admitted to various hospitals. The injured were also taken to hospitals. They were admitted to three hospitals, not just one and it was but natural that it took some time for all the information to reach here.

When I landed at the Patna airport, I was told that hundreds of people have died. I went to the hospitals first. I rushed to the Nalanda Medical College Hospital and then to the mortuary of that hospital, which is located elsewhere. From there, I went to the Patna Hospital and thereafter, I went to the accident site. The District Magistrate and high officials of the Police, the State Government and the City administration were present there. I met and talked to the doctors in the hospitals. I asked the names of almost all the injured persons and tried to ascertain

other information like their addresses etc. from them. After talking to all the people, the information that I was able to gather by day before yesterday was that in all 71 people had died in the accident. It has been reported in the newspapers that more than 100 people have died and this was repeated in the House today. Who is going to hide the actual number of casualties? Is the Bihar Government going to do so and if it has done so, why has it done so? Will the Railway Ministry hide the number of casualties? Why would it do so? According to the latest information available 7 to 8 people are in critical condition in the hospitals. It is difficult for a person to survive if he received 60, 70 or 80 percent burns. This is what the doctors say. Only the fortunate ones survive. Five-six days after receiving the burn injuries, many types of complications develop. Therefore, I would like to tell my friend, Shri Kumaramanglam, who is not present in the House and who had gone to attend a meeting after informing the Chair, that if we give the figure of 71, it would not be raised to 100 later on. It would have been better had he not used such words to intervene for the sake of humour, because we are worried. It is not proper to interrupt like this. So far, 74 people have died. This information was received till 11.30 A.M. today. So far 33 bodies have been identified, which means that 41 bodies had not been identified till 11.30 A.M. The number of people admitted in the various hospitals, at the moment is 47. 26 people are admitted in the Nalanda Medical College hospital, 19 are in the Patna Medical College Hospital and two in Danapur Railways Hospital. Thus the total number of people admitted is 47.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was told only yesterday that the Director of the Forensic Laboratory, Bihar, Dr. S.R. Hassan, is investigating as to how the accident took place and regarding the things that have been said here. The information sent by him is that it was an oxygen cylinder and not an acetylene cylinder. Shri R. Tarit Baran Topdar rightly said that had it been an acetylene cylinder there would have been an explosion. It has been found out after investigation that it was a gas cylinder. The pressure of that cylinder

should have been 200 kilograms for some cubic centimeter, but it was only 24 kilograms. The conclusion is that gas had leaked out of that cylinder and only some gas was there in it. This is what he has said and it has also been said that the report would be submitted within one week. At the moment, he is saying that the fire erupted due to gas leakage. An obvious question that can be raised here is as to how the fire spread. When I met the people in the hospital, they told me that the cylinder was placed in a particular place and when someone lighted a beedi the fire broke out and caught the saree of a lady sitting nearby. The fire did not spread due to the saree and the beedi alone because the gas had already leaked and it took no time for the fire to spread in the entire bogie. Who had kept that cylinder there? Many hon. Members have raised this question and rightly so. The gas cylinder should not have been carried in that compartment. As Shri Dasai Chowdhary said, such things take place usually in Bihar. We also agree that such thing should not happen, but some passenger might be carrying it. Day before yesterday, I was told in Patna that it was the mischief of railway employees who were carrying the cylinder for the purpose of railways itself, and it was not known then whether it was an acetylene cylinder or not. Generally, it was believed that it was an acetylene cylinder, which the railway employees were carrying to do some work. Now it has become clear that it was not an acetylene cylinder. Now the question is why was a railway employee carrying an oxygen cylinder and which was the destination? In the investigations conducted day before yesterday, it has been said that there were three railway employees in the bogie. There was one switchman, who had nothing to do with gas and he is also among the dead. Then, there was a lever man and an account clerk. None of them had to do anything with an oxygen cylinder, as far as their work is concerned. Therefore, it is not true that they were carrying those cylinders, in connection with their work. As far as the statements of the members as to how the gas reached there and the probability of connivance are concerned, I admit that this type of activity or

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[Sh. George Fernandes]

malpractice is prevalent in the railways, especially in the area, which is being discussed and we have not been able in curbing such activities. I do not deny that we have not been able to curb such activities. This inability is not a new thing, it is not something limited to the past four and a half months, it has been there for a long time. Hon. Shri Ram Dhan has narrated his experience. Can anybody say why should the railway employees be strict? Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, a few days back, Railway week was celebrated and a Prize distribution function was also held to give away prizes to some railway employees, who despite an attack on them by some hooligans held their ground and discharged their duty sincerely. They faced them bravely, despite the fact that they were mercilessly beaten by ticketless traveller. A similar incident took place, Few days back. Some ticketless travellers tried to get down from the train, near Mathura Railway station, by pulling the chain. When some railway employees tried to prevent them from doing so, they came back armed the next day and mercilessly beat the railway employees. Now, where do they go for redressal? So, the responsibility of the security of the railway employees is on my shoulders. In such a situation, if somebody expects us to call the police and get these people lathi charged or get them injured, the question does not arise because these things would not happen and should not happen. Therefore, what I have to say is that wherever there is a fault, it should be corrected and wherever there is an error, it should be rectified but Mr. Deputy Speaker, with due regard I would like to say that we would be committing great injustice to the railway employees, if we say that they are involved in a conspiracy. Now, all the hon. Members spoke about chain pulling as to when, how and under which law, chain pulling was banned. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are two laws in this regard, one is as old as 1890 and the other is that of 1989, which would be applicable from July onwards. Before the formulation of the law in 1989, a joint committee was formed which has many eminent members from this House

and perhaps, I think that 20-30 members of the committee were from the Lok Sabha and 15 were from the Rajya Sabha. Among the 30 members from the Lok Sabha were the then Railway Minister, Shri Madhavrao Scindia, Shri Basudeb Acharya Shri P.R. Kumaramanglam etc. who dealt at length on this issue and expressed their opinion on it. Besides Prof. P.J.Kurien was also a member and most of the members were those who are no more members of the House, but they all worked seriously in formulating this law. Members from the Rajya Sabha who strongly expressed their views included Shri Mirza Irshad Beg, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee and Shri P.N.Sukul, who has been associated with the Trade Union movement. So, in all 45 members held deliberations in the Joint Committee and helped in the formulation of this law.

[English]

Section 59 says:

"The Railway Administration shall provide and maintain in every train carrying passengers such efficient means of communication between the passengers and the railway servants in charge of the trains as may be approved by the Central Government."

Chain is a means of communication to the driver and to the guard that something is wrong.

In the proviso to Section 59, it says:

"Provided that where the railway administration is satisfied that the means of communication provided in the trains are being misused, it may cause such means to be disconnected in that train for such period as it deems fit."

{ Translation }

That law was passed by this very House and those hon. Members, who participated in this discussion today, they have also passed

this law. Now the question is whether there is something wrong with the law? I would not say there is anything wrong with that law. I also do not mean to say that it should not have been passed. It was passed when it was felt that it was necessary to pass such a law. It is also not that only now a need was felt to pass this law. In fact the law relating to the railways which was formulated in 1890 and which has been in force since the British period, has not any written provisions in this regard. What should not happen is not mentioned therein, but provision was made, so that the railway system works properly and the East India Company could make communication arrangements, as perceived by the Government because at that time the railways were under the control of the company and the responsibility of making those laws applicable were vested in Government. Under the law, the Government also had the right to repeat the provision, wherever it felt that the provision is not required. Now, the question is when did all this start? According to the information I have, at least 30-year old documents have come to my knowledge. Earlier documents are not available with us, but they can be searched because if we want to discuss the matter threadbare, we will have to search and find out those documents, so that the discussion can go ahead. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, action on preventing unlawful chain pulling on this train commenced in October, 1984, and the work of removing the chain communication system in this train, began in October, 1984. Till date this system has not been restored and after every six months the time limit is extended. This is because we can make such an arrangement for a period of six months only. This is done by the Railway Board internally. There is no provision for any such thing under our laws, but the Railway Board has formulated a rule wherein it can blank off a train in so far as the chain is concerned but the time limit has to be extended after every six months:

[English]

"383 Mokama-Danapur Passenger

train has been blanked off in so far as the chain is concerned since October, 1984."

[Translation]

The latest orders in this regard were issued on 26-27 March, 1990, because the six month period had ended by then. The Railway Board gave it a further extension of six months from 1st April to 30th September, 1990. Now the question is that why a need was felt to do it. Had a need not been felt I feel a decision would not have been taken to extend it after every six months, since 1984. 102 pairs of different trains were blanked off in so far as chain was concerned throughout the country and this train was one of them. Out of those 102 pairs of trains, 60 pairs of trains belonged to the Eastern Railway alone and five belonged to the North-Eastern Railway.

[English]

SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV: Including the long distance trains also?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Including the long distance trains passing through Bihar.

[Translation]

At the moment, I do not want to go into the details of those trains but with reference to the point made by our young friend Shri Nitish Kumar that this is the only train which runs on time, I would definitely say that the reason for it is that the chain system in this train has been removed.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh): It is not that this train did not run on time before March, 1984. I have travelled in this train, many a time. The main reason for its being punctual is that it carries commuters. We all wish that it should start at the right time and reach its destination at the right time. Hon. Minister, Sir, please make a note of it.

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20.00 hrs.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Definitely, an enquiry should be conducted. We are fully prepared for it, but in this context, I would like to say one thing. As far as cases of chain pulling in the trains is concerned 39,208 cases of Alarm Chain pulling were reported from 1986 to 1989.

[English]

39,208 cases of chain pulling are reported. These are the reported cases. Those cases which are not reported could also be there.

[Translation]

Besides, 15425 incidents of Hosepipe disconnection also took place. Thus altogether 54633 such cases have been reported. Attempts are made to stop the trains in Bihar without any reason by pulling the alarm chain or by disconnecting the hosepipe.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Bombay North): Hon. Minister, Sir, you must be having information about all the States in this regard. Would you kindly tell us about Maharashtra.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Incidents in other States are negligible as compared to Bihar. In Bombay and Maharashtra, no such thing is happening and the same is true of South also. I am not presenting these facts with the intention of finding fault. No one should think in that manner, rather, I am saying that this is the problem there. Therefore, we should think about it and had chain system been in operation in that train, we could have avoided an accident of this magnitude. I am presenting the figures in this regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, now I turn to the question of old bogies most of which are in operation in Bihar. I agree with the hon. Members that some sort of step-motherly treatment has been meted out to Bihar by the railways. We do not deny it, but the bogie which caught fire was manufactured in 1988, at the Integral Coach Factory, in Perambur,

Madras. We still have 30 to 35 year old bogies and in my view even more than 35 years old bogies are in operation.

This coach is just one and a half years old and has undergone the periodical overhauling in November, 1989.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. members have alleged that the doors of the coach were jammed. I would like to clarify with due respect to the members' sentiments that I went into the said coach after opening that very door itself.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: You might not have opened the middle door.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, actually I went inside the coach through the middle door. As regards the repeatedly said point that the doors were closed, I would like to point out that the doors were blocked because commodities like vegetables and milk had been dumped near the doors. The newspaper reports and the statements of the passengers injured and admitted to the hospitals also confirm this. According to the passengers lying in the hospital, the fire enveloped the whole compartment all of a sudden but they were not able to assign any reason for this. The way the vegetable and milk containers were dumped against the doors and in view of overcrowding of the compartment, it was not possible to open the doors. The newspaper reports have suggested that the doors were not functional and the Hon. Members have echoed the same in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also know something about the working of the Railways. The coaches were manufactured in 1988 and had undergone periodical overhauling in November, 1989 under railway rules. The coaches were only 1 1/2 year old and they could not have jammed in such a short period. It is not that the coaches were brought from somewhere else. The coaches in question were the regular running coaches. They were running on that line. Hence it is not correct to say that the doors of the

coaches were not functional. The fact is that the doors could not somehow be opened and an inference was drawn that the doors were jammed, which was wrong.

Hon Members have also said that the passengers were not properly treated. I agree that there is problem of inadequate facilities in the hospitals particularly in the case of Nalanda Hospital where I myself observed that the dead bodies were lying on ice on the floor of the hospital. It was probably because the rules of the hospital provided for keeping the dead bodies that way for 72 hours for the purpose of identification. The problem was as to how and where to place the dead bodies there. I immediately ordered that air-conditioners installed in Railway Offices should be removed from there and installed at Railway hospitals. The doctor of the Patna Medical College Hospital also complained of inadequate facilities for preserving the dead-bodies when I visited the hospitals. 15 air-conditioners from various railway offices were shifted and installed in the two hospitals that very night and the next day. These air-conditioners are still there. Arrangements were also made to transport the costly medicines by train to the two hospitals because the doctors had complained of the dearth of the same. A question regarding the arrangements that could or could not be made in the hospitals was also raised here. I feel constrained to mention here that the Chief Medical Officer of Danapur Railway Hospital put forth the proposal of shifting the serious patients to Danapur Hospital, before the senior doctors of the two hospitals. But the doctors of both the hospitals responded agitatedly saying that the patients need not be shifted as it would put them into a trauma. They confidently added that they can treat them properly there and the only thing they wanted us to do was to arrange for the medicines. While arranging for the medicine, we also deputed the doctors of the railways to perform the stand-by duty alongwith the medical staff of the two hospitals. These doctors are ready to offer their services whenever needed.

An hon. Member made the allegation

that we politicised the whole issue by removing the party volunteers from these hospitals. But, on the contrary, I welcomed the young volunteers of some political parties present there publicity because I saw that they were engaged in the service of the patients. I personally saw them serving water, grapes etc. to the patients, I greeted them. There was nothing of that sort till at least I left that place round about 7.30 p.m. the day before. All political activists were engaged in the service of the patients there since this accident took place.

SHRI SATYNARAYAN JATIYA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to bring to your notice that the burn-cases are more prone to infections and this is why they are not placed beside the normal patients. I would, therefore, like to ask you whether exclusive arrangements would be made for them to check the incidence of infection?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is difficult to make instant arrangements in case of accidents.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Regarding the Judicial enquiry, I would like to point out that the Commissioner of Railway Safety is not a part of the Railways as is generally made out. It is generally assumed that the Commissioner is one of the officers of the Railways and he might just hush up the matter and his report might not be of any consequence. It is a wrong assumption.

An hon. Member asked about the number of enquiries made by the Commissioner of Railway Safety during the past years and the number of accidents in which the Government employees were found responsible. In this regard, I would like to say that the Commissioner of Railway Safety enquired into 11 such cases and in 10 cases, he has submitted his final report and out of them, in seven cases railway employees were held responsible and action was taken against them. The Commissioner of Railway Safety is an Officer attached with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and not an Officer of the railways and he is only concerned with the

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safety of railways. Now if one says that the civil aviation too is no exception to such mishaps and, as such, an officer thereof has no right to enquire into these matters, then it becomes a totally different thing. I want to remove such misconceptions from the minds of hon. Members. The Commissioner of Railway Safety deputed to enquire into this case does not come from the Southern Zone. To my mind, there are four Commissioners—viz. Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western. The Northern Commissioner of Railway Safety has been entrusted with the responsibility of enquiring into this case and he is going to start his work on it as a Government enquiry. On 22nd of the month, he will commence his work by duly issuing a public notice in the press. He will also record the statements of all the passengers including those injured or otherwise admitted into the hospitals. Not only this, he will also record the statements of such patients who were not adequately attended to or who were not given proper treatment. I want to assure the hon. Members that the enquiry would be conducted in a manner that will leave no room for any kind of suspicion or doubt.

A mention was also made of Kerala accident said to have been caused by tornado. A Committee to enquire into it was constituted under the Chairmanship of a retired Air Vice-marshal which had the maximum number of experts as its members. They could not identify the reasons thereof but said that it could not be caused by tornado. In this accident, the train had derailed and fallen into water claiming the lives of more than 100 persons. The report of that Committee was presented by me on the very first day of the current session in this House. This report was debated in the discussion held on the Budget as also during a special discussion but nobody endeavoured to critically analyse the report. I would, therefore, like to dispel the doubts of the hon. Members in this regard. I want to assure the House that a thorough enquiry would be conducted into it and we will see to it that the report is

submitted at the earliest. Necessary steps would be taken wherever the need arises. The experts in the field will be assigned this job also.

A question was raised regarding Nagda. I would very briefly like to summarise it. This mishap took place on 11th of April at 3.10 P.M. 63 people were injured of which 24 were admitted to the hospitals. 19 of them were admitted in the Jana Sewa Hospitals of Nagda, 4 in Civil Hospital, Nagda and one in the Railway Hospital, Ratlam. But in all, 63 people were hospitalised. Except 24, all others were discharged after first-aid and as per the information available with me, uptill 18th, that is, today morning, there are 9 people in the Jana Sewa Hospital of Nagda, 4 in the Civil Hospital, Nagda and one person in the Railway Hospital, Ratlam. The loss incurred by the Railways on account of this accident comes to Rs. 3 crores while the loss caused to the public in account of the damage of houses, hutments and vehicles etc. comes to about Rs. one crores as per the report submitted by the Collector. I want to assure hon. Member Shri Jatiya that we are taking all the necessary steps in this regard.

Now I would like to make 2 or 3 points more

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI (KOTA): HAVE THE PEOPLE BEEN COMPENSATED FOR THE LOSS OF Rs. 1 crores caused to them?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: There are legal ways and means to deal with every thing

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI: Was the money paid?

SHRIGEORGE FERNANDES: Rs. 250 have been paid.

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI: Is there any value of Rs. 250 in present times?

SHRIGEORGE FERNANDES: I agree, but we had to abide by certain rules and

regulations.

SHRI DAU DAYAL JOSHI: Change these rules. Such redundant rules should not continue during your regime.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: I agree with you. We shall reform things that need to be reformed. Regarding the issue of giving compensation, it applies to Nagda as well now, though the case of Nagda is of a different nature and does not come under its purview. The amount of compensation was Rs. one lakh under rules. In our budget speech, we have declared to raise the amount of compensation to Rs. two lakhs now and this proposal will be implemented as soon as the new legislation to this effect is enforced. Till then it will remain as Rs. 1 lakh. But after receiving the comprehensive information or report of this mishap, we have announced in the House yesterday that the compensation of Rs. 1 lakh will be disbursed till the previous rules remain in force and as per our announcement made while formulating the Budget that a provision of Rs. 2 lakh will be made for the compensation amount with effect from the first of July; we shall implement it prior to that on the 1st of April instead. Now that we are facing certain complications in executing the legislation, and that is, that the compensation amount of Rs. 1 lakh is admissible under rules and we are not in a position to implement this with retrospective effect. Rs. 1 lakh as the amount of compensation is legally admissible from the 1st of July as per the legislation enacted and passed in this House and the amount of Rs. 1 lakh more will be added to it in the shape of remuneration from the Railways making it a total of Rs. 2 lakh. Then, a compensation of Rs. 2 lakh will be given to the family of each deceased. Likewise, the amount paid to the injured will also be doubled as per this decision. Therefore, I say that those who have suffered the most on this account and, as such, cannot feel relieved by whatever monetary help we offer to them because their households have been destroyed, shall be provided some relief through this medium. Hence, if certain newspapers of Bihar have published something wrong in this

regard, it is because there was room for a misunderstanding or misapprehension. I had made clear in my yesterday's declaration that we will enquire into the matter of some absurd and objectionable remarks being made by the Managing Director or any other officer thereof saying that they cared least for this announcement as was complained by the hon. Members here and also indicated in the press. I do not believe, that they can make such comments but we will look into it. If the allegation is proved to be correct, no effort will be spared to set the things right.

SHRI ISHWAR CHAUDHARY (Gaya): Are you going to fix some age limit for the grant of compensation?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: There is no provision of age limit under the new rules. We were in your constituency the day before. As per the previous rules, the compensation was Rs. 5,000/- each, but an ex-gratia amount of Rs. 10,000 was given to the family of the deceased apart from the compensation. Shri Ram Babu had asked whether we are contemplating to give them Rs. 1000 each in the near future but as I said, they have already been paid Rs. 10,000 each. Rs. 2,000, in place of the earlier amount of Rs. 1,000, are now paid to those whose near relatives have been injured or killed in the accident. We will keep in mind your suggestion and see to it that no undue delay is made in the grant compensation and the recipients or the beneficiaries face no problems.

Lastly, I would like to make 2-3 points more. Firstly, an hon. lady Member said that while travelling in a train, one is not sure whether he will reach his destination or not. This apprehension is there. I agree. But I would like to point out that the Indian Railways carry one crore 12 lakh passengers daily, in sub-urban, long distance, fast and slow trains. This number of passengers include those who travel in the AC coaches and other coaches. If a coach has the capacity of accommodating 300 passengers, 900 people travel in it and where 80 passengers can be seated, there are messed 250-300 people. However, I will advise the hon.

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Members not to be frightened so much. The railway employees always try to avert mishaps because the train driver is the first casualty if a mishap takes place. So he will always try to avert the mishap. The other railway employees will also like to avert railway accidents because it is through railways that they earn their livelihood. Keeping all these facts in view, we must have been proud of our railways but on the contrary, most of us only criticise it by terming it as a hazardous and unsafe service. This is all right so far as the style and diction of a language is concerned but this is not the reality.

Coming to the incidents of fire, many hon. Members have said that fire incidents are on the increase. I would like to point out that there has been improvement in the railways due to the efforts of the Railway staff and railway administration and not any political party. It does not matter who is the Minister. Ministers will come and go. I want to furnish certain figures in this regard. In 1963, 81 cases of fire took place in the Railways which decreased to a number of mere 13 in 1986-87, 12 in 1987-88, three in 1988-89 and 8 incidents in 1989-90. There is a lot of difference between 81 incidents of fire taking place some 25 years ago and 8, 3, 12 and 13 such incidents taking place during the last four years. This improvement has been made possible due to the endeavours of the railway employees and administration and we are proud of both. Our sincere efforts would be in the direction of improving this service further. Nobody will try to cause damage to this sophisticated service, railway employees and administration being no exception. Just now, an hon. Member, Shri Kumaramangalam asked as to what was the ratio during the last four months in comparison to the occurrence of 456 accidents last year? I would like to make it clear to him that the number of accidents taking place is not a testimony to the gravity of the mishaps. It can be verified only on the basis of the number of accidents occurring per million train kilometres.

In the year 1980-81, per million train kilometres there had been two accidents, which came down to 0.9% in 1988-89 and 0.88% in 1989-90. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not count Pakistan among the countries having a big railway system although there the percentage is 12.45. So far as other railway systems are concerned, it is 1.10% in Canada, 1.88% in U.K. from where the railways first originated. People say that the railway system in Germany is extremely modernised and precise. Even there the percentage is 1.54. France, where the speed of trains is highest in Europe, the percentage is 0.88 and in India too, it was 0.88% last year. We should indeed be proud of it. The railway employees have contributed in bringing about tremendous improvement in railways over the years, and the credit for this goes entirely to the employees and not to the Ministers.

We said that there should be no accidents, and when a new Minister comes to power, the ex-minister said that no accidents should take place in future but accidents cannot be stopped with the help of a magic wand as there is no politics involved in it but accidents can be prevented through hard work, devotion to duty and people's resolution to work in the right manner. If we and the House do not admire the functioning of Indian Railways who else would do so? Do we expect the people of France to say that in India, the rate of railway accidents is lower than that of France. At least once in a while we should pat these employees and utter a word in commendation of their work. I am very much concerned about the conditions in which they are working and we must give a thought to it. In today's newspapers, hon. members must have read about the news as to how a railway gangman saved railways from a major accident by spotting a bomb lying on the railway tracks at Mathura, a place not very far from Delhi. In an area like Punjab, where lot of turmoil exists and there is every possibility of a grave danger to the trains any moment, the trains are moving. People gave a call for Bandh, but the railway employees kept the wheels moving. Every night, from dusk to dawn the railway employ-

ees or the gangmen keep a close vigil of the railway track and that too on foot for a duration of 12 hours. They are accompanied by one or two Security Personnel. We should commend their work at times because they have played a vital role in preventing many mishaps thereby saving human lives. We do admit that in this field some changes, some improvements should be undertaken and we shall certainly carry out the said improvements. We are taking certain immediate steps in this direction.

The first thing that we have done in this regard is that from day before yesterday, i.e. from the 16th of the month, we have taken special steps to see that explosive materials are not carried in the trains. We have issued orders in this direction and the said orders are being implemented in the entire country. Secondly, vigorous steps to prevent the railway employees also from carrying explosive material during the course of their journey would be undertaken. Thirdly, our officers and supervisory staff while travelling in trains even when they are not on duty should be vigilant since their duties are not confined to any restricted area only but they should also keep a close vigil on any suspicious object lying in the surroundings and also pay adequate attention towards the safety and security of the Railways and steps are being taken to implement them. Arrangements are being made to carry out special checks in trains through g r p and r p f. As pointed out by the Members, we will look into the complaints of collusion by the Forces. But ultimately these are the only two forces through which we can prevent such happenings. Through them special checks will be carried

out. Further, a campaign would be launched in the country especially in Bihar on a large scale through Television and other publicity media, cinema slides etc. to prevent transportation of explosive materials in the trains. Similarly, steps would be taken to stop the carriage of goods by dumping it on the doors, thereby blocking the passage. Passengers will be advised not to resort to chain pullings. Hon. Members have complained against unauthorised vendors. Vendors carry fire with them, at times, when they enter the compartments. In case any passenger is carrying a gas cylinder, it may lead to disastrous results. We have taken firm steps to redress such complaints and I am sure that it will yield excellent results.

In the end, I would like to say that in view of the tragedy that has taken place in Bihar, I would like to arrange a meeting with hon. members from Bihar. To tackle the complaints regarding railway system in Bihar, the Government railway administration and all elected hon. members should jointly make special efforts to find ways to solve this problem.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to all hon. members for having participated in the discussion and for the valuable suggestions that they have made. To implement their suggestions is my duty. With this, I conclude.

20.31 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, April 19, 1990/
Chaitra 29, 1912 (Saka)*