

DOCK WORKERS (SAFETY,
HEALTH AND WELFARE) BILL
AS AMENDED BY RAJYA SABHA

[English]

SECRETARY GENERAL : Sir, I lay on the Table the Dock Workers (Safety, Health and Welfare) Bill, 1985, which has been returned by Rajya Sabha with amendments.

12.12 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE
MEMBERS' BILLS AND
RESOLUTIONS

Twenty-fifth Report

[English]

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI (Dharmapuri) : Sir, I present the Twenty-fifth Report (Hindi and English versions) of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions.

ELECTION TO COMMITTEE

[English]

Central Advisory Committee for
National Cadet Corps

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI ARUN SINGH) : Sir, I beg to move :

"That in pursuance of section 12(1) of the National Cadet Corps Act, 1948, the members of this House do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Speaker may direct, one member from amongst themselves to serve as a member of the Central Advisory Committee for the National Cadet Corps for a term of one year from the date of election, subject to the other provisions of the said Act and the Rules made thereunder."

MR. SPEAKER : The question is :

"That in pursuance of section 12(1) of the National Cadet Corps Act, 1948, the members of this House do proceed to elect, in such manner as the Speaker may direct, one member from amongst themselves to serve as a member of the Central Advisory Committee for the National Cadet Corps for a term of one year from the date of election, subject to the other provisions of the said Act and the Rules made thereunder."

The motion was adopted

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Twenty-Ninth Report

[English]

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMEN- TARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT) : Sir, I beg to move :

"That this House do agree with the Twenty-ninth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on 11th November, 1986."

MR. SPEAKER : The question is :

"That this House do agree with the Twenty-ninth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 11th November, 1986."

The motion was adopted.

12 13 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF
URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

[English]

Reported Fire in Sahar Terminal
of Bombay Airport

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE (Bombay North Central) : Sir, I call the attention of the

Minister of Civil Aviation to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon :—

“Reported fire in module II of the Sahar terminal of the Bombay Airport and the steps taken by the Government in that regard.”

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : On the night of 9th November, 1986 at about 1020-25 hrs. some smoke was noticed in the extreme western end of the Mezzanine floor of Phase-II, Terminal-II of Bombay Airport. The Airport Fire personnel, who were immediately alerted, reached the scene of accident within about 3/4 minutes. Five Airport Crash Fire Tenders and one Water Tender were pressed into service. Announcement was also made on the Public Address system advising the public and staff to vacate the building. The City Fire Service was also summoned. The fire was located and extinguished within a period of about one hour thirty five minutes by the joint efforts of Airport Fire Service and City Fire Service. Action was also taken immediately to propel the smoke out of the building.

Since the entire departure concourse on the first floor was filled with smoke, Air India operations were shifted from Module-II to Module I, where necessary arrangements were made for security inspection of baggage and passenger check-in. Module-II, with the exception of the affected portion of the Mezzanine floor, was reopened for normal operations at about 6400 hours on 10th November, 1986.

Preliminary investigation reveals that the fire had originated from Shop No. 1 dealing with ready-made garments which is located close to the Boarding Gate No. 14 on the Mezzanine floor of Module-II. The fire had spread through the entire shop and reached the adjoining Shop No 2 which deals in leather goods. Both the shops were gutted. It has been reported by I. A. A. I., after a preliminary investigation, that the fire was probably caused by an electric toaster which was being used in Shop No. 1.

However, the exact cause of fire will be known only after the detailed enquiry is completed.

The damage to the airport property is estimated to be around Rs. 10—Rs. 15 lakhs. Apart from the Shops No. 1, and 2, the damaged portion includes a part of the false ceiling, escalator and an electric store adjoining Shop No. 1. Workers have already been deployed to clear the debris. The building is insured and steps are being taken to file the claims. There has been no injury whatsoever either to the public or to the staff present in the affected area. One fire officer who was extinguishing the fire had a small cut on the finger.

The repairs to the damaged portions of the building are being carried out on top priority and the building is expected to be made fully operational within a period of about three weeks.

The Director (Operations) of the International Airports Authority of India has been asked to conduct an enquiry into the incident and submit a report within a period of one month. The inquiry would, among other things, identify the cause of fire, assess the extent of damage to property and recommend preventive measures to avoid recurrence of such incidents.

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE : From the statement made by the Hon. Minister it is, of course, clear that the Director (Operations) of the International Airport Authority has been asked to conduct the inquiry. He will submit his report within a period of one month. He has been asked to identify the cause of the fire etc.

However, from the preliminary investigation which is stated in this statement, some issues arise. In the first place it has been stated that the preliminary investigation reveals that the fire had originated from Shop-1 dealing with the readymade garments, and it has spread to the leather goods shop. Surprisingly it is stated that the fire was caused by an electric toaster. I don't know what the electric toaster was to do with the readymade garment shop or the leather shop.

MR. SPEAKER : It was to do with the people occupying those shops.

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE : It is a matter for inquiry. Perhaps, some unauthorised canteen might have been carried on by the shop keepers and therefore, the toaster or some such electrical appliances came into existence there with the result, perhaps, the fire had taken place.

Secondly, the fire was detected within three or four minutes and the fire personnel were alerted. It is stated that the Crash Fire Tenders and one water tender were also pressed into service immediately. Even then it took nearly 1½ hours to extinguish the fire. From this, one important thing arises according to me. The duty-free shops which are located there, have been located in such a congested way and I should say that the designing or the Module II of the Sahar Airport has been so faulty that it might have happened due to this congestion only. It is good that luckily the fire was extinguished and no damage was caused to any personnel. But because of this faulty designing sometime in future it may also take a very serious turn if any such fire takes place.

I submit that even though more than half the international traffic passes through the Bombay International Airport, more money is spent on the Delhi International Airport than on the Bombay. The Module-II which has been designed, though very recently designed, has been very faultily designed. There is no place even for persons to receive the passengers on arrival. Then, there is no reception lounge in the ground-floor and so many other faulty designs have been made. By this not only the passengers and the persons who come to receive them are inconvenienced; but also any time if any such fire takes place, there will be a great disaster and it would be difficult for the people even to go out for safety.

So, from this incidence which has taken place and which has been able to be controlled, we must take a lesson and I should submit that after this inquiry, even the designing of the Sahar Airport has to be reconsidered and if possible more space should be provided, so that in future we can

not only protect the Airport from fire, but also we can provide more convenience to the passengers and the persons who come to receive them or to see them off. Even for the Customs officials also conveniences are not there and from this point of view also I request the Minister to look into this matter.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have to say some pinching things about Bombay Airport. But first I will say some good things and later on, some pinching ones.

MR. SPEAKER : You may first say pinching things and later on put balm on them.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : First I will say soothing things and subsequently pinching ones.

As a whole, the work in the Civil Aviation Ministry is going on well, specially Vayudoot has done a good job in providing its services in the backward areas and far-flung areas. (*Interruptions*)

Now I would like to ask Shri Tytler two or three questions. First is that when this building was constructed, whether some security measures used to be taken or not in such buildings—it is not confined to only Bombay Airport, it can apply to other buildings also—so that in case of fire etc. necessary steps to control it could be taken immediately? Because the Statement you have made shows that you could control fire only when fire tenders were requisitioned from outside and in this process much time was wasted. In the meantime huge losses could have occurred and it was only by chance that the losses were not to the extent these could have gone. One thing I want to know is whether such security measures are taken in all the airport buildings or not?

Secondly, it was not for the first time that fire incident took place. Earlier also such incidents have occurred. It occurred at Calcutta Airport and at Bombay Airport too there had been once fire accident. Why these fire fighting measures are not permanently stationed there? Why is such arrangement not made at places where property worth

crores of rupees is involved and where this can happen at any time? Permanent arrangement should be made there. The moment there is fire, the fire tenders should be pressed into service. Either at the airport itself or somewhere nearby this arrangement should be available. Are you thinking of making such arrangement?

This fire by heater or toaster is not confined to the Airport alone or it is not that these are available only in one shop. This can happen at other places also and this work cannot be done without the connivance of the employees of the airport. Will you enquire into the aspect whether such things are not being done at other places also so that in future such incidents do not take place? Will you look into this also?

Lastly, I would like to say that may be it is a minor incident, but the purpose of the Hon. Speaker in allowing this to be the subject of the Calling Attention Notice is that it could have been the cause of the major incident also. Therefore, there is need to be vigilant about this. What precautionary measures are going to be taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents? Kindly give details about this.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur) : The reports received from the Bombay newspapers are conflicting.

12.24 hrs.

[**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER** *in the Chair*]

Some papers say that fire was due to a toaster, others have reported that some girl was cooking food on a heater and a curtain nearby caught fire which later on spread to other parts. Some are of the view that the fire was due to short circuiting and scores of people saw short-circuiting happening with a spark which later turned in a big fire. When you have entrusted the enquiry of the entire incident to some officers, how can you say with surety that the fire was due to a toaster?

It is also a matter to think that the contractors who were awarded this job used inferior quality wires because of which there was short circuiting.

Secondly, in big buildings there is provision of fire alarm. It is in Delhi as well as in Bombay. If there is fire or smoke, the bell starts ringing violently and fire tenders reach there immediately or if you have your own fire tenders you can start extinguishing fire. Fire started at 1.45 and you could not control it. There was no fire alarm there and it was a serious lapse. The Chairman, Prof. N. K. Singh is a good friend of mine, he is quite competent person and I do not want to put him in embarrassment, but in his Press Conference he stated that with the grace of God a big fire incident was averted. How many times will the God shower his grace, such fire incidents will take place frequently.

Moreover, public address system was not systematic. It is true that only one person got minor injury, but there could have been stampede. Every big building has sprinklers and in case of fire these automatic sprinklers start working and extinguish fire. But here the fire ravaged for one hour and 35 to 40 minutes and no sprinkler could work. You had to call fire tenders from outside. It is really very strange.

Another thing Prof. Singh has said that when he gives report...

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : When did he say this? Did he tell this thing to you.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS : It has appeared in the newspapers. I can show you the newspapers.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : I asked you and you have replied. That is all.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS : Prof. N. K. Singh has said in the Press Conference. PTI has reported this, it cannot be wrong. He said that on my submission of the report, the Minister will consider whether he needs to visit Bombay Airport or not. I would like to say that a serious fire has taken place and the way the country is facing problems, the incident can be misinterpreted in foreign countries and it can be termed as sabotage. In such a situation, was it not the responsi-

bility of the Minister to immediately visit the place, in stead of waiting for the report of Prof. N. K. Singh ?

I would like to say something more also. It is a general tendency to get the big buildings under-insured. I have a definite information that the Bombay Airport too has been under-insured. The Minister should tell us as to how much under-insurance has been there in the case of Bombay Airport and how much insurance claim has been filed with the insurance company ?

In conclusion, I would submit that earlier also once fire took place at Bombay Airport and an enquiry was conducted and findings were given. I want to know about those findings and the precautions that were taken on the basis of those findings ?

SHRI JAGDISH AWASTHI (Bilhaur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this issue the Hon. Members have expressed their concern and have asked questions also. I would like to ask only one question that as you have said in your Statement, within 3/4 minutes of fire taking place, fire tenders tried to control fire and fire tenders from the city were also requisitioned and they both jointly extinguished fire in one hour and 35 minutes. This means that a serious accident was going to occur. By the grace of God, life, and property worth crores of rupees could be saved, otherwise it would have been a major fire accident. I want to know that after what time of pressing your fire extinguishing service into service, the city fire service reached on the spot ? When this incident took place, its cause was given as a toaster. You have appointed the Director as enquiry officer. This shows that you have made clear before the enquiry that the cause of the fire was toaster and nothing else. When this fire took place, there was smoke also and you have said that you immediately made arrangements and controlled the fire. Some inconvenience was caused to the passengers also. The question is that it can be a deliberate attempt as well as unintentional fire. Such incidents do happen. In the circumstances prevailing in the country, every thing is possible. You will have to think seriously over it. I would suggest that in stead of asking the Director to enquire into

the incident, a judicial enquiry should be instituted so that the facts may be brought to light, because the people who are found to be guilty would like to defend themselves. Therefore, impartial enquiry should be held. Whether any favouritism was shown in the allotment of the shops to private persons, violating the set procedure, as Shri Dighe has said that there is a procedure and the place was very congested ? What was the condition of the electricity equipment installed there, who was the contractor and why did such an incident take place ? All these things should be enquired into. We should be thankful to the God for saving us from a disaster. Definite arrangements should be made to control such incidents immediately. If you look into the matter seriously, there will not be recurrence of such accident. With these words I conclude.

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT (Nagpur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a very serious incident. It is a newly constructed airport and not an old one. Fire had broken out there, but was controlled in time. But what are its causes ? It might not have been caused by wiring, because wirings are quite new and are inside the walls. These wirings were also tested. There was nothing in flammable inside the shop, so how did the fire break out. You also cannot say anything definitely. Now a days all types of incidents are occurring in our country, so suspicion is natural that it might be a part of a big conspiracy of creating disruption or to distroy the building I would like to submit to the Hon. Minister that judicial inquiry should be conducted into this incident. Who was present at the shop at that time, did any stranger come to the shop and what was burning there at that time ? So it is necessary that all these facts are enquired into. Nothing such has been said in your statement. The fire had broken out in shop No. 1 which was a shop of readymade garments and there was nothing in flammable. At least you should have taken us into confidence through your officers about the probability of the incident. We were expecting a reply from you as to whether it was a part of a big conspiracy or an act of the foreigners or intruders who wanted to create disorder in our country. As per the report received from the press, we are thankful to your department

that they succeeded in controlling the fire immediately. The fire extinguishers are kept at every place there and with their help the fire could have been extinguished immediately. The buckets of water and sand are also available there. Had the fire spread, the consequences thereof would have been horrible. It appears that there was none to operate the fire equipments. Had those equipments been utilised in time, the fire could have been extinguished at the initial stage itself. It is also possible that all the people working there, might not be knowing the operation of the equipments, therefore it is necessary that they should be imparted proper training of it. Since this incident was related to Airport, so it could have caused us a huge loss. Therefore we want that complete judicial enquiry should be conducted into the reasons of incident and facts may be made known to the general public. We expect only this much from you.

[English]

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Sir, first of all, I am grateful to the Members for the concern that they have shown, the suggestions that they have given and also the comments which they have made regarding International Airport Authority.

Small fire or big fire, it is alarming because nobody knows what turn the fire can take. After all, we are all humanbeings and we may or may not be able to control it. I would like to go back to 1979 when the first fire took place in Bombay. There was some recommendation which was given at that time, as one of the Hon. Members had said. The recommendation at that time was that we must have insurance, I do not know exactly for what amount. The recommendation, I would inform you, was for the installation of fire detection and fire alarm systems and to use less wood. Then also, because the fire took place, where the exhaust of the air conditioning valve had blasted, and they had asked them that this should be installed in the air conditioning system because fire had started from the air conditioning unit.

I would like to inform the Members that all these precautions we had taken and

some other suggestions which came from Digheji that faulty construction, no proper place where people can come and sit, but anyway whatever is made now, nothing can be done. But the third module which is going to be made in that we will see some more modifications can be done as per your suggestions and we would let the architect know about it. The mere fact that, you are able to control the fire in time, it only shows that the International Airport Authority office and the people concerning them, had done their job well and we must congratulate them. It was only because the fire alarm system was working that we came to know about the fire within a minute or so. Probably, if the fire alarm system had not worked, we would have had a serious fire.

Coming back as to how we came to the conclusion that the fire had started from Shop No. 1 on a heater, now it is common precaution which I do not want to say, but I agree with it. I would make sure that this Committee will look into it and that the responsibility may be fixed on the Airport Manager to check that all these dangerous things which are being done inside the Airport, which could be safety hazards, they should be fined or punished or their licenses should be withdrawn, if they break this thing. We will see to it that this is done. Regarding fire, as soon as I came to know about the fire, there was no flight and I was very keen to go but within a hour or so, we got the information that the fire is under control and by the first flight, our Chairman went there. He is a senior most person, as far as the International Airport Authority is concerned. Our concern is there. Our officers' concern is there. Even my officers' in the Ministry are all aware what is happening? What precaution are being taken to see that thing should not recur? Even the Air India did a good job because their public address system was working. That is why, in a very systematic way, the people were taken to the module 1 where the luggage was removed and not a single pile of luggage was damaged. No passenger got hurt because all people started running here and there. We got it done very systematically by moving people from one place to another. But the fire did not engulf them. They could move in a care free manner. The mere fact that we control-

led the fire that was the reason why there was not much damage suffered. Why we have said this because, we have still to file a claim from the insurance people. Roughly, we have said that the fire damage must be between Rs. 15 lakhs to Rs. 20 lakhs. We do not know. I do not think it is that much. But it is for the insurance people and the airport authorities to decide. It cannot be done now, because we have come to Parliament within two days of the fire. We cannot tell you exactly. But the damage was done to the escalators, ceilings, some tiles and flooring. All this has to be repaired, but we do not know how much is the damage.

I have just got a report: the total insurance at the airport is for Rs. 42.82 crores, i.e. for Terminals I and II. Terminal-II is insured for Rs. 20.58 crores. That is the insurance that we have.

Coming to the first point, Mr. Dighe had asked how we can conclude in any manner, because when the Chairman of the International Airport Authority had gone there and saw things, nobody had reported anything. I do not want to comment on it, because I have a full enquiry; and if the enquiry does not bring out a satisfactory answer to some of the questions you have raised, and if it does not satisfy me about the cause of the fire or the precautions, surely we would like to give it to another authority which is competent; but that decision can be taken only after I am not satisfied, or if the report which comes is such that it gives vague answers. But if it does not bring out results, I will make sure that we have a proper enquiry on it.

We have taken precautions. I have also mentioned them. One Hon. Member had spoken about God. Naturally, we are all God-fearing people. We would all like to pray to God to see that no damage is done to either the national property or to any individual persons. It is a general phrase which anybody can use. But I would like to inform the House that every precaution has been taken, and that is why we were able to control the fire. Whether it is a small fire or a big one, it is the concern of my Ministry, or my Department; and we

have to see that passengers are safe, and that the building is safe. After the insurance work is started, we will try to bring the building into operation as quickly as possible.

12.42 hrs.

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

[Translation].

- (i) Need to start a new train from Kota or Ratlam to Delhi and to restart Dehradun Express

SHRI SHANTI DHARIWAL (Kota) : Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, Kota is a largest industrial city of Rajasthan where the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project and various other big factories are situated and the people from all parts of the country are working there. All the trains running from Kota to Delhi are so overcrowded that thousands of passengers have to go back from the station due to non-availability of reservation. In Frontier Mail the ticket is to be purchased up to Meerut instead of Delhi and in Bombay-Jammu Tawi the ticket is to be purchased upto Ambala. The reservation available in Delux and Sarvodaya trains is almost negligible. Under such circumstances, the poor and middle class people can only travel by Dehradun and Janata Express. Therefore, I request the Central Government to start a new train from Kota or Ratlam to Delhi.

19 Down and 20 up Dehradun Express running between Bombay and Dehradun, have been cancelled, though it was the most useful train on this route. Therefore, this train should be restarted immediately. If it is necessary to cancel a train due to certain reasons, any other train running on this route may be cancelled. But Dehradun Express should be restarted. In addition to it, a new train from Ratlam-Kota to Delhi should be introduced.

[English]

- (ii) Need to declare the people of Ladakh region as Scheduled Tribe

SHRI P. NAMGYAL (Ladakh) : The mini-census in connection with the grant of