

11.0 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: ACCIDENT TO  
TRAIN NO. 13 UP TEZPORE EX-  
PRESS ON 30-5-1977

MR. SPEAKER: Prof. Dandavate. Since the statement is long, why don't you lay it on the Table? You will have to read the budget speech also. I suggest you lay it on the Table.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): I lay a statement regarding accident to train No. 13 UP Tezpur Express between Udalguri and Rowta Bagan stations of Northeast Frontier Railway on 30-5-1977.

#### Statement

Sir, it is with deep distress and anguish that I rise to make a statement to appraise the House of the accident to 13 Up Tezpur Express on Northeast Frontier Railway on 30-5-1977. At about 01.25 hours on that fateful night, while 13 Up Tezpur Express with 11 coaches was running between Udalguri and Rowta Bagan stations on the Rangiya-Rangapara North, Metre Gauge single line section of Alipurduar Division, the train engine and 4 coaches next to it fell into the stream while the 5th coach remained hanging at bridge No. 141. After intensive search, 85 dead bodies have been recovered. Eighteen persons sustained grievous injuries and 88 persons had simple injuries. The injured who required hospitalization were admitted in the different hospitals in the area.

2. There was a sudden flash flood in the stream at the site of the bridge on the night of 29th and 30th May, 1977. As a result of this unprecedented flood, the water level at bridge No. 141, which had a 40 feet opening, reached a level 6 feet higher than the highest flood level ever recorded at this site. This unprecedented heavy flow undermined the east end abutment of bridge No. 141,

which collapsed under the pressure of water. It is also learnt that because of the suddenness of the flood and the heavy flow, a portion of the flood water got diverted from bridge No. 139, which was about 700 metres to the west of this bridge, and had an opening of 140 feet, to flow eastward and to find its outlet to this bridge No. 141, which finally collapsed. The suddenness and fury of the flood was such that not only did the east abutment of bridge No. 141 collapse, but other bridges Nos. 114, 125 and 145 also in this area suffered heavy damage.

3. After proper study of all the relevant data, the past history and the condition of the flood in the past at the various bridges in this section, Northeast Frontier Railway had classified those bridges which required special watch under the category of vulnerable bridges. This bridge No. 141 did not have any previous erratic history and it had its recorded highest flood level sufficiently below the bottom of girders and, therefore, this bridge was not classified as a vulnerable bridge.

4. The Permanent Way Inspector incharge of this section had trolled on the affected section, between 20.15 hours and 21.25 hours on 29-5-1977. At the time of his trollying, he had not noticed any unusual flow or forebodings of a high flood at this site. The Bishop of Tezpur who happened to pass near this bridge at about 22.45 hours also did not find anything unusual. All these facts indicate that this unprecedented heavy flood happened all of a sudden and that there was no warning whatsoever for such a heavy flood to occur within such a short time after the Permanent Way Inspector's inspection. Local enquiries also indicated that flood of this magnitude had never occurred in living memory.

5. There was a military unit travelling by this train as also an Air Force doctor. Immediately after the accident, the doctor alongwith the

help of military personnel started rendering help and offered first aid. In addition, a doctor from Udalguri reached the site within a few hours. As rail access to the site was cut off, due to a number of bridges having washed away, Army and civil authorities had also been alerted and railway doctors along with Army and civil doctors reached the site and started attending to the injured within a few hours after the accident. The Army rendered valuable help in removing the injured to the hospitals in rescue operations and also in removing the marooned people to safe destinations.

6. The Chairman, Railway Board, who got information at Calcutta, immediately flew to Gauhati and from there reached the site of accident. The Chief Minister, Assam accompanied by some of his colleagues, also visited the site. Immediately on coming to know the gravity of the accident, I flew to Gauhati and from there reached the site of the accident to inspect the rescue operations and the relief given to the affected persons. I found that a large number of the victims came from the lower income groups and I, therefore, enhanced on the spot the quantum of the ex-gratia relief which is normally afforded on such occasions. I also visited the injured who were being treated in the hospitals.

7. I am appointing a Claim Commissioner who will go into all individual cases of the deceased and the injured and after ascertaining the legal heirs, will award appropriate compensation, the maximum limit being Rs. 50,000/- per head.

8. In order to have a thorough search for the victims of the accident, specialised divers were flown from Calcutta Port Trust along with me, with the necessary diving equipments and they started their operations on the 31st May evening.

9. In order to recover all the dead bodies, it was necessary to lift the coaches and for this purpose, with

utmost effort, the bridges which were damaged on the Rangiya side of bridge No. 141, were repaired in time and the relief train reached the site on the 3rd of June, with the utmost expeditiousness. Simultaneously, Naval divers with heavy underwater equipments, from Vishakhapatnam, were also moved to the site. With the assistance of all this, all the coaches had been lifted and a thorough search had been made for the dead bodies.

10. The State Government of Assam had also constituted a fact finding committee to go into the causes and circumstances of this accident. They have come to the conclusion—I quote:—

“Bridge No. 141 at KM 64/11-12 between Udalguri and Rowta Bagan railway stations on the Rangiya-Rangapara North Metre Gauge section of Northeast Frontier Railway was a 40 ft. span girder bridge over a small channel. This channel normally remains dry and caters for the local drainage from paddy fields. The accident took place at about 01.25 A.M. in the early hours of 30th May, 1977 because of damage caused to the railway bridge No. 141 by the spill over of a flash flood of extraordinarily high magnitude which took place between mid night and 01.00 A.M. on the night of 29th and 30th May, 1977 in the Golandi river. This spill was most pronounced about three Kilometres upstream and north west of the railway bridge No. 14 and flowed in the south east direction towards Kahibari village with great fury. This flood was of such an unprecedented magnitude that it severely taxed the railway bridge No. 141 resulting in the washing away of the eastern abutment of the bridge and the railway embankment behind this abutment. The diversion of Golandi flood waters during this flash flood of such a severe nature created conditions under which the bridge had to cope with a flood

[Prof. Madhu Dandavate]

many times its capacity. This had a disastrous effect on the bridge. From the aerial survey and the statements on record, it is quite evident that what happened on the night of 29th—30th May, 1977 was a flash flood of devastating proportions."

11. The Additional Commissioner of Railway Safety commenced his statutory enquiry into this accident on the 2nd June at Rangiya. According to his provisional finding, the accident was caused due to the scouring of the Rowta Bagan end abutment and approaches of the bridge No. 141 by the diverted waters of river Golandi, normally crossing the track through the adjoining bridge No. 139. He has not held any railway employee responsible for failure to prevent the derailment of 13 Up Tezpur Express and has ascribed the accident as an "Act of God".

12. The armymen who were in the front coaches, were prompt not only in saving their own lives but also in expeditiously rescuing other passengers in that dark early hour. For those courageous armymen it was the noblest hour of their life and I expressed to them our deepest gratitude.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN. (Coimbatore): What about the other accidents. There are other serious accidents also. In the Trivandrum section of the Southern Railway, there was an accident. Only yesterday there was another.... (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: Will you all kindly sit down? It is unfortunate; nobody is happy about the accidents and so many people dying. He will present the budget and you are going

to talk about railways for three days; you can certainly take these things up, not just now.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: You cannot confine the budget discussion to accidents only. There should be a statement about the whole thing; the budget discussion is not meant to discuss accidents only.

11.10 hrs.

ADDITIONAL EMOLUMENTS  
(COMPULSORY DEPOSIT)  
AMENDMENT BILL\*

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND REVENUE AND BANKING (SHRI H. M. PATEL): I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Additional Emoluments (Compulsory Deposit) Act, 1974.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): On a point of order. Under the provisions of the proposed Bill, government employees would not be allowed to withdraw their deposits; according to the assurance given by the government earlier, they should be allowed to withdraw the second instalment in cash. The Act was extended only for one year. Because of this Bill, the employees' suffering would be for five months while it will give benefit only for two months. According to the promise made by the government, the money had to be returned. The introduction of the Bill can come up in July because this session will end only in August; it could have been introduced after fulfilling the promise of the government to pay the second instalment in cash, both the principal as well as the interest. The government has to fulfil the promise and return the entire amount deducted from the wages of the employees. I object to the introduction of this Bill.