

much cheaper than the usual market prices in the country. So, there was no tendency of profiteering.

As far as pricing policy of the STC's edible oil is concerned, as I stated earlier, it was never planned to make profit out of it. It is a commitment made to the civil supplies agencies to maintain PDS. Thereafter, after importing the oil at the imported prices, we do add our service charges, tinning charges, transportation charges and also other details. So, all that is accounted for and it is credited into the Government's account totally. It is not an individual profiteering tendency on the part of STC.

[Translation]

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT: The hon. Minister has stated in his reply that edible oil worth nearly Rs. 110 crores has been lying in the stock for quite a long time. If edible oil remains blocked for more than 4 to 6 months in the stock, it starts emitting foul smell and it becomes unfit for human consumption. Has the Government taken this factor into account? What is the quality of this oil and in which condition it is at present? No one in Maharashtra is willing to accept it even free of cost. How much loss Government will incur if it is not purchased by the consumers and instead used only in the manufacture of soap etc.?

[English]

SHRI P.R. DAS MUNSI: There should not be any impression that stock itself should be treated as a glut. It is not like that. The stock is precisely worth Rs. 110 crores or a little over 100 crores as was stated by the hon. Member—the crude stock and not the refined stock. Its quality gets deteriorated month after month. We have taken experts' opinion regarding refined crude stock of soybean, refined crude stock of rapeseed

and also the neutralised palmoil. Even after eight or 10 months, if the quality of neutralised palmoil gets deteriorated, it can be usually replaced by fatty acid industries so that the country may not import fatty acid and they can use neutralised palmoil.

It is in our stock from last October. We have also calculated its life taking into account all the angles. The life of this will remain intact, without being deteriorated before refining, for 8-10 months. Still there is a demand of 7 lakh tonnes and our stock is a little over one lakh tonnes. So, it is not a dead stock. It will be refined for the use of consumer. Therefore, there should not be any anxiety on the part of the hon. member as well as the consumer. We will do something about it. But, first, I would like to inform the hon. member that we take all precautions and safety measures while refining it for improving its quality, whatever stock we have with us, whether it is meant for consumers or others.

Train Accidents

*65. SHRI D.B. PATIL†:
SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHER-
JEE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of railway accidents/derailments occurred from January to June, 1989 zone-wise and the number of trains involved;

(b) the number of persons killed/injured in these accidents;

(c) the quantum of compensation paid to the families of the deceased and to the injured persons;

(d) the loss to railway property as a result thereof; and

(e) the findings of inquiry commissions/committees set up to go into the causes of accidents and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) to (e). A state-

ment is given below.

(a) and (b) Zone-wise number of consequential train accidents, derailments, number of trains involved, number of persons killed and injured during the period January 1989 to June 1989 is as under:-

STATEMENT

Railway	No. of consequential train accidents	No. of derailments.	No. of trains involved	No. of persons killed and injured												
				Passengers						Other than Passengers						Total
				Killed	Injured	Grievous	Mi-nor	Killed	Injured	Grievous	Mi-nor	Killed	Injured	Grievous	Mi-nor	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	13			
Central	41	35	45	61	99	142	111	6	12	72	105	154	154			
Eastern	36	28	43	6	22	56	2	4	5	8	26	61	61			
Northern	38	29	40	—	—	—	12	13	18	12	13	18	18			
North Eastern	16	8	18	1	1	4	6	9	11	7	10	15	15			
Northeast Frontier	38	35	39	—	5	23	2	2	3	2	7	26	26			
Southern	26	24	27	—	1	47	—	5	14	—	6	61	61			
South Central	24	20	26	—	—	1	4	1	1	4	1	2	2			
South Eastern	57	55	58	26	45	62	2	2	4	28	47	66	66			
Western	26	18	26	—	—	25	49	23	50	49	23	75	75			

Note: Figures are provisional

(c) Ex-gratia payments to all the injured and the next of kin of the identified dead have been arranged.

No compensation has yet been paid, since compensation payment is a judicial process and is payable as per decision of the Ad hoc Claims Commissioners.

(d) The cost of damage to railway property in train accidents has been estimated at Rs. 1063 lakhs approximately.

(e) Inquiries have been completed in 291 cases and 11 cases are still under investigation. As per provisional findings, 186 accidents occurred due to failure of railway staff, 29 due to failure of persons other than railway staff, 42 due to failure of railway equipment 17 due to sabotage and another 17 due to other factors. Appropriate action, as deemed necessary, is taken.

SHRI D.B. PATIL: Whenever a railway accident takes place, it is generally presumed that the accident might have taken place due to negligence and lack of safety consciousness on the part of the railway staff as well as due to lapses in safety management. This general presumption is not without any basis. In 1989, from January to June, in six months, three hundred and two accidents had taken place. Out of these three hundred and two accidents, inquiries have been completed in 291 cases. As per provisional findings, it has been found that 186 accidents occurred due to failure of railway staff and 42 accidents occurred due to failure of the railway equipment. That means due to laxity on the part of the Railway Department these major accidents have taken place. The number of passengers killed in these accidents is 94; the number of persons other than passengers killed due to other than accidents is 188. This is a serious matter. The Railway Ministry is on record that nearly 20 percent of the Indian Railways' rolling stock and tracks need immediate replacement. But, according to my information, nothing has been done in this matter. This has resulted in the accidents of a serious

nature. So, what safety measures are they going to take to avoid these accidents, particularly the lapses that have occurred on the part of the railway staff?

11.24 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: I would like to point out in all humility that safety is given the maximum priority in the working of the railways, and we are not prepared to compromise where the safety of passengers and safety of trains is involved. Our efforts are continuous in the direction to minimise train accidents and, in all humility, I will say that a fair deal of success has been achieved in this direction. In the last four years, there has been a reduction of 32.9 percent in the total number of accidents on the Indian Railways; there has been a reduction of almost 40 percent in total accidents to passenger trains. If you take million train km., which is a correct index to take, then as the volume of traffic goes up, it is obvious that some of the accidents are going to go up, but, in spite of that, as I said, the total number of accidents has come down by 32 percent. But if you take million train km., which is a correct index, it has come down as much as 42 percent. But this does not mean that we are satisfied with our performance or we are complacent. There is a need for continuous improvement all the time. And there is still a very great margin where we could make improvement. We understand that each accident brings out our weaknesses and our failings and it is our effort to try and overcome these weaknesses and failings as they occurred on the Indian Railways.

I would like to request the hon. member to kindly study the last three or four years' railways budgets in greater detail as far as renewal of rail track is concerned and renewal of rolling stock is concerned. We are renewing as much as approximately 4000 kilometers of railway track every year in the Seventh Plan against an average of about 1900 kilometers only in the Sixth Plan. We are spending, if my memory serves me right,

approximately 20 to 23 percent of our total Plan budget on track renewal, and we are spending as much as 30 to 33 percent on renewal of rolling stock together making up 50 or 60 percent of the total railway budget on these two heads alone. We will have renewed approximately 19,300 kilometers of track by the end of the Seventh Plan, and that was our target in the beginning of the Seventh Plan. By 1995 we will have cleared the entire backlog that we inherited of track renewal in 1985. The point the hon. member has made is totally relevant, it is totally correct, and we understand the importance of these points we are doing our best with in our budget to give maximum priority to these areas or railway working which the hon. member has pointed out.

As far as measures for improving safety are concerned, there is, as I said, an increased emphasis on renewal of tracks and rehabilitation of bridges, introduction of modern technology like panel inter-locking, track-circuiting etc. Train accident warning device has been tried on certain level crossing gates and if it is found successful it will be employed on other railway crossings. Modernisation of workshops is taking place at a more accelerated rate; a very large amount of allocation is set aside for modernisation of workshops because it has a direct effect on the state of the rolling stock. Psychological tests for operational categories like drivers and pointsmen etc. are conducted. These have been drawn up by our RDSO and various other organisations and are being implemented, especially after the age of 45. Revamping and training of staff to adoption of modern teaching aids, etc., are also taking place and intensive field inspections are also taking place. And as I said, in all humility, it has yielded results, there has been a drop of approximately 42 percent in railway accidents for million train kilometers and 32 percent—almost 33 percent—in the number of railway accidents over the last four years. But, as I said, our efforts are continuing in the direction, we are still not satisfied with our performance, we feel that there is still a margin for improvement, that we have to endeavour to bridge and our efforts in this

area will continue with the same vigour as they have been in the last four years.

SHRI D.B. PATIL: It has been stated in the reply that, "no compensation has been paid since compensation payment is a judicial process and is payable as per the decision of the *ad-hoc* claims commissioners". The process has not been completed. It is also stated, that "ex-gratia payments to all the injured and the next of kin of identified dead have been arranged". I would like to know from the hon. Minister, the maximum that is being paid to the next of kin of the deceased in general and what is the quantum of ex-gratia payment made to the next of kin of the identified persons.

I would also like to know from the hon. Minister whether any differentiation has been made over the compensation to the passengers and to the non-passengers.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: No compensation is payable to the non-passengers because under the Railway Act is not the responsibility of the Railways; road-users for instance in respect of unmanned railway crossings are not really the responsibility of the Railways. The responsibility does not devolve on the Railways, but it devolves on the road-users. In fact, quite frankly, we are probably one of the few Railways which include accidents at unmanned level crossings in our figures. Normally, Railways abroad do not even include this in figures of railway accidents because it is not considered their responsibility. So, really compensation is payable, unless in some tremendously exceptional case, only to passengers. The ex-gratia payable is Rs. 5000/- in the case of death; Rs. 1000/- in the case of hospitalisation for a short period of time and Rs. 2000/- if it is for a longer period of time in the case of grievous injuries and Rs. 250/- in the case of simple injuries. I would repeat over and over again that ex-gratia should not be confused with compensation. Compensation is a totally different category, the quasi judicial proceedings, because in the case of death especially, litigation can follow; we have to know who the successors are and to whom

the compensation is payable. And that is why, adhoc Claims Commissioner is appointed in consultation with the State Government. The ex-gratia is paid only for immediate out of pocket expenses, to give immediate relief and it is not to be confused with compensation. As far as compensation is concerned, approximately upto a lakh of rupees is paid in the case of death and also in the case of serious injuries, compensation is paid upto a lakh of rupees. But the amount has to be determined by the adhoc Claims Commissioner appointed as I said in consultation with the the State Government. And also the person to whom the compensation is payable has to be determined by the ad hoc Claims Commissioner. We have found that it takes a considerable amount of time and a considerable amount of exchange of letters and correspondence with the State Government in the appointment of ad hoc Claims Commissioner. Almost sometimes it takes three to six months. And then the payment of compensation also takes a very long time because the ad hoc Claims Commissioner takes some time to come to his conclusion. And to obviate that process and to expedite, we had put up a proposal of setting up Railway Claims Tribunals, which has been passed by the Houses of Parliament. Probably, I think, within the next two or three months, Railway Claims Tribunals will be set up and all the appointments made. One the Claims Tribunals are set up, it will greatly help in expediting the process of payment of compensation, which we ourselves feel is too long.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE: Sir, the Railway Minister has taken great pains to conclude that things have relatively improved though he said that he is not happy. Sir, in 1987-88, there were 604 accidents. During the first five months of 1989, the no. of accidents has gone up to 302. Is it a sign of improvement? And to my knowledge, one more accident has been added to the dubious honour of South Eastern Railway, where I travel and the figure had gone up from 57 to 58. Therefore, the results of track renewal, etc. probably are being over-estimated a little, which figures show. In reply to part (e)

of the question, it has been stated, as already mentioned by my predecessor, that 186 accidents were occurred due to the failure of railway staff and 42 accidents due to failure of railway equipment. I would like to know how this very subtle distinction is being made by the safety authorities between the failure of the railway man and the failure of the railway equipment. Recently there was an accident in our South Eastern Railway due to brake failure. The wagons have hit the cabins, the cabins fell down and the people died. I would like to know in which category this accident comes, whether this is a mechanical failure or human failure. I am asking this question because I feel that the inquiries are conducted in a way which really covers up the failure of the railways to properly maintain their equipment and also their way of track renewal. I would like to know whether this kind of very peculiar way of trying to throw the blame on the railway staff will be reduced by actually increasing the railway staff by filling up the posts that are lying vacant.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: I have already prefaced my answer by saying that whereas there has been an improvement of 40 percent in the last four years on the number of railways accidents, we are by no means satisfied. It is our effort to continuously minimise the number of accidents and continually improve in the process. But I would like in all humility to point out that we are carrying 11 million people every day. We are running 11,000 trains everyday. We are not supermen. It is not possible to have a totally accident free railway. In many places in the world where the technology is far more advanced than in our railways, their record is much poorer in accidents in many areas of railway working than ours. I will just take an example. In the matter of accidents at railway crossings, our accidents are only 55 of which almost half or more than half are unmanned level crossings which is not the responsibility of the Railways. Even than we are including it in the railway accidents. In America, level crossing accidents are as many as 6,000. In Japan they are as many as 700. The latest figures of French Railways of

1987 show 294 level crossing accidents. I am not trying to quote these figures to hide behind them. We are not satisfied. We have got 55 level crossing accidents on the Indian Railways. I do not want to have 55. I want to have zero. That is what we are working towards. I am not trying to take cover behind these figures. But I just in all humility want to point out that we are not supermen. It is not possible to have a totally accident free railway.

Again, figures, I suppose, are not really relevant where human suffering and human tragedy is involved. But I would like to point out that as far as modes of transport are concerned, we are carrying as many passengers as the road transport is carrying. Where there are 40,000 deaths on the Indian roads, there are only approximately 200 deaths on the Indian Railways. Again I am not taking cover behind these figures. I am not trying to manifest complacency.

As far as railway staff is concerned, the hon. Member has asked how these categorisations are determined, how accidents are put under failure of railway staff or how they are put under the failure of railway equipment. I am not a technical person. But technical people go into these railway accidents. Enquiries are made. Where deaths are involved, Commissioner of Railway Safety gets involved. In other accidents, our own senior officers get involved. There are certain norms and certain yardsticks by which categorisation of railway accidents take place. I am afraid, I am not a technically equipped to be able to give you details how exactly these categorisations take place. But if you so desire, I am prepared to set up a meeting between my technical people and the hon. Member in my office. Certainly we will try to satisfy the hon. Member and dispel her doubts or apprehensions whatever they may be.

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: I am surprised at the statement of the hon. Minister that accidents on unmanned railway level crossings are not the responsible of the Government.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: I did not say the Government but I said the Railways.

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: Railway belongs to the Government. Is it not a fact that very large number of level crossings on the Railways of the rural roads are still unmanned? It should be the responsibility of the Government and should not be left to the devices of the people themselves in rural areas to cross the railway lines as they like. I would like to know what is the programme of the Government, after hundreds of years of working of the Railways in this country, to man these level crossings on rural roads and by what time will they all be covered and manned, and is it the responsibility of the Government also to pay compensation to the people whose life and property is lost on account of accidents on rural roads because of unmanned level crossings.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA : Sir, nowhere the world over are all level crossings manned. It is not physically possible and it is not always totally necessary. There is a certain amount of responsibility which devolves on the road users. If you are supposed to drive on the right side.. (*Interruptions*). I am not yielding, Sir. I have listened to hon. Member's question and I would like to answer it. In the Railways, as I have said— I am quoting what is there in the Railways Act—the responsibility devolves on the road user, and it should because unmanned railway crossings do not come under the control of the Railways, and nowhere in the world are all railway level crossings manned. It is like saying that compensation should be payable for a person driving on the left side of the road when he should actually be driving on the right side. There are certain responsibilities that do devolve on the road users. We have, in the Railways, launched an awareness campaign. Through wide publicity, we are trying to educate and create an awareness in the road users. I am afraid, it will not be possible to man all level crossings because it would cost four to five hundred crores of rupees, if not more. As I said, nowhere in the world are all level crossings

manned. In fact, a large majority of them remains unmanned. There are certain norms. Where traffic units increase beyond a certain amount, manning of level crossings is then contemplated between the various agencies involved. If you talk of safety at unmanned level crossings, then why stop at manning? I shall put it to the hon. Member that we should make a fencing along the entire 60,000 kilometers railway lines throughout the country. Certainly I would be prepared to do it if the hon. Member manages to get for me thousands of crores of rupees which would be required.

RAO BIRENDRA SINGH: Sir, I leave it to you to decide whether you are convinced with the argument of the hon. Minister.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, that is all.

ROA BIRENDRA SINGH: Is it to be expected that the people who want to cross the railway lines in rural areas, where very large number of roads are being constructed, should wait the whole night to cross the railway line to reach their homes from *mandis*? Is it not the responsibility of the Government to provide manned level crossings where roads are being constructed?

11.44 hrs.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay okay. Shri Sobhanadreeswara Rao.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA RAO: Sir, we are aware that the hon. Minister is doing a lot to improve the functioning of the Railways. Now that some positive results have been achieved, there is scope to minimise these accidents in some more areas also. I would like to enquire from the hon. Minister whether some of these accidents are taking place due to the fact that the engine drivers or guards are made to work for more than ten hours from signing on to signing off. Sometimes they are made to work for twenty-four hours also in a single duty. In such cases naturally due to the

stress and strain, sometimes accidents may take place and in that even it is not fair on the part of the Railway administration to penalise the unfortunate driver and the guard. I would like to know whether it has come to the hon. Minister's notice that some time back a goods train was operated without a guard and a passenger train which followed collided and met with a fatal accident in Bihar. So, in these circumstances, I would request the hon. Minister to issue very strict instructions to all his officers that the loco running staff should not be made to work for more than ten hours from signing on to signing off.

Sir, regarding the compensation, I would like to inform the hon. Minister that this ex-gratia payment is a very very paltrium. The Government should take a decision in this matter, not the Railway, because the Railways is one of the public sector undertaking run by the Government. The Government should certainly see that the person who dies because of the fault of the Railways, is adequately compensated for the loss of his life. His family should be given help taking into consideration how much money he would have earned had he been alive and because of his death due to railway accident how much money his family has been put to loss. Unless the Government take into account all these things, no amount of compensation would be adequate. The accidents will go on and on like this. So, will the Government take suitable action in this regard?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Sir, a great vigilance is kept and the employees are keeping an eye on the duty hours of the Engine Drivers. The hon. Member has made very valuable suggestions. In the case of compensation, I have said that ex-gratia payment should not be confused with compensation. The ex-gratia is only for immediate out-of-pocket expenses. However, the hon. Member's suggestions are very constructive and we will certainly keep them in mind.

Revision of Bank Officers Salaries

*66. DR. G. VIJAYA RAMA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state: