

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Tuesday, 20th May, 1952

The House met at a Quarter to Eleven
of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See Part I)

11-45 A.M.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT

TRAIN ACCIDENT NEAR BIKANER

Mr. Speaker: I have received three notices of adjournment motions from Messrs K. Subrahmanyam, Vittal Rao and M. L. Dwivedi. Each of these refers to the same subject, namely, the unfortunate accident near Bikaner, I believe on the night of the 18th at 11 P.M. when 45 passengers lost their lives and 61 were injured. We are all very sorry indeed for this mishap and our sympathies naturally go to the families of the deceased. But, at present, I am not concerned with that aspect of the matter. The question for decision is whether such a subject can come at all by way of an adjournment motion.

In the first place, I should like to make it clear that whatever the nature of the disaster, the extent of it and all that, the thing has happened and I do not see any urgency for the discussion. From that point of view, the element of urgency is lacking in this. It is not any continuing thing so that one must immediately rush to discuss that. It has happened; very unfortunate indeed. That is one part of it, so far as the admissibility of the motions is concerned.

Then, another supervening difficulty is, I really do not know on what
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basis a discussion can take place in this House, unless we have all the relevant facts before us. It may be a pure accident; it may be somebody's negligence; it may be somebody's effort by way of sabotage. There are so many possibilities. What is it that we are going to discuss within almost 24 hours of the happening, however tragic it may be? The better course for the hon. Members would have been, in such circumstances, to put in a short notice question and get information from the Government, and look at what the facts are, because, the discussion has to proceed on facts. It is a very wrong practice to table an adjournment motion immediately without knowing oneself what the facts are. All of us are ignorant about these facts. So, I do not think I need discuss this matter any further. I cannot even recognise the adjournment motions. That apart, it is enough for me to say that I cannot give my consent to these motions. Let it not be misunderstood by the hon. Members who have tabled these motions and by the House that I have no sympathy for the unfortunate sufferers of the accident. With all my sympathies, I do not know what to discuss without knowing what the facts are. So, the first step will be if the hon. Members are so advised and if they think proper, to table such a question as they like and get information from the Government. However, though I do not give my consent, I should like to know from the hon. Minister of Railways such facts as he can give about this, if he has any at present. It is too early; but, he may have some facts. It will be better if he states those facts so that the House may feel at ease as to what actually has happened. Can he make a statement now?

The Prime Minister and Leader of the House (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru):
Well, Sir, if I may say so, with all

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

respect, the only course one can follow just now is to give the facts we have. One can hardly discuss the matter before the enquiry is over. With your permission, Sir, at the outset, I may give the information that we have received till about an hour ago.

On 18th May, 1952, at about 23 hours, there was a head-on collision between 24 Dn. mixed train from Merta Road to Bikaner and 221 up goods train from Bikaner to Merta Road, between Bikaner and Palana stations of the Northern Railway. The site of accident is about seven miles away from Bikaner. Deaths 45: 36 or 35 at site and the rest on the way when they were being taken to the hospital. This includes one fireman of goods train. Injuries: at present there are 50 in the hospital.

The first report from the site of accident issued by the guard of 24 Dn. through a spare guard reached Bikaner at about half an hour after midnight on the 19th. Relief train with two senior doctors from Bikaner hospital, full medical equipment, water for drinking, generating set for lighting and empty coaching stock for patients left Bikaner at 2.00 hrs and reached the site at about 2-30 hrs. This relief train was also accompanied by some railway officers of the Bikaner Division and civil and police officers.

Before the arrival of the relief train, railway staff assisted by other passengers removed some injured persons from the wreckage and the remainder were taken out by special staff on the relief train with the aid of electric light from the generating plant on the relief train. At the same time, necessary medical aid was rendered to all injured at the site.

All injured were removed to Bikaner Hospital where full medical attention, including transfusion of blood plasma, etc. and setting of fractures in plaster, was given to all injured by mid-day of the 19th. Full comforts for treatment, including beds for all, in the hospital were ensured. Fifteen were discharged after medical treatment in the hospital by the mid-day of the 19th and 52 were still in the hospital. Now, there are 50.

Three passenger-bogies, all third class, next to the engine of passenger train were completely telescoped and the fourth I, II, Inter and III

composite bogie mounted the telescoped bogie in front and fell on one side. Both the locomotives were badly damaged. The damage to track was negligible. It appears to be a case of wrong line clear having been given to one of the two trains. The system of working on the section is by paper line clear ticket.

Enquiry by the Government Inspector of Railways, Bombay, has been fixed for the 22nd instant at Bikaner. The General Manager, the Chief Operating Superintendent and the Chief Medical Officer, Northern Railway, flew from Delhi at 9-30 hrs. on the 19th for Bikaner on their way to the site of accident. They also went round the Bikaner Hospital to see the condition of the injured.

The line was blocked by the wreckage. I might mention that the two engines were so badly inter-locked that it was difficult to separate them. As a result, the subsequent trains from Bikaner and to Bikaner were cancelled. According to information available now, through communication is expected to be restored between 12 o'clock and one this afternoon, that is, in about an hour's time from now.

That is all the information I have, Sir.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

REPORT OF INDIAN DELEGATIONS TO F. A. O.

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Report of the Indian Delegations to the thirteenth session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation Council held at Rome in November, 1951 and the sixth session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation held at Rome in November-December, 1951. [Placed in Library. See No. IV. L 3(84)].

Shri D. D. Pant (Almora Distt.—North East): We are not able to hear, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member will find it in the Order Paper.

Shri D. D. Pant: The microphones...

Mr. Speaker: No argument; nothing of the kind.

Shri D. D. Pant: Perhaps the microphones are not working.