

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:66
ANSWERED ON:27.07.2000
ENQUIRY INTO FIRE IN ORDNANCE DEPOTS
BRAHMANAND MANDAL;CHANDRA NATH SINGH

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the villagers in Bharatpur and nearby areas suffered heavy losses due to fire in ammunition depot;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the other such fires that broke out in other ammunition depots or ordnance depots including Pune and Kanpur in the country during the last three years and losses suffered in each of these incidents;
- (d) the outcome of each of the enquiry conducted in regard thereto and the follow-up action taken in each of the cases;
- (e) whether the victims of the fire in each incidents have since been compensated;
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and (g) the concrete steps taken to ensure safety and security of the ammunition depots and to avoid recurrence of such incidents?

Answer

MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES)

(a) to (g): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (g) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 66 FOR 27.7.2000.

The Rajasthan Government has assessed the loss to private property of villagers at Rs. 39.41 lakhs affecting 235 families in 13 villages.

The following incidents took place in Ammunition/Ordnance depots in the last three years:-

Unit at	Date of	Approximate
Incident	Loss.	

i) Dappar	09.10.1997	Rs. 20 lakhs
ii) Bharatpur	28.04.2000	Rs. 393 crores
iii) Dehu Road	03.05.2000	Rs. Nil
iv) Kanpur	28.05.2000	Rs. 4 crores.

The outcome of each of the enquiry conducted in regard thereto and the follow-up action taken in each of the cases is at Annexure-I.

There were no victims except in the fire at Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur. The families of two victims at Bharatpur have been sanctioned ex-gratia amount of Rs. 2 lakhs each as compensation. Details have been sought from Government of Rajasthan regarding the civilians who were injured as a result of this incident.

After the fire accident in Ammunition Depot Bharatpur, the Raksha Mantri visited the Depot and took stock of the situation. He met with the officials and staff at the Depot, and also met with the people of nearby villages. An official of the State government also met with him. On his return from the visit the Raksha Mantri took a series of meetings of officers of Ministry of Defence and Army Headquarters where, inter alia, it was decided that the Army would prepare an action plan to bring all ammunition under proper and standard cover within two years and senior officers will be sent to all Ammunition Depots to inspect the safety and security of the Depots and prevent a recurrence of such an incident in future.

ANNEXURE-REFERRED TO IN THE STATEMENT GIVEN IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 66
27.7.2000

The findings of the Courts of Inquiry and action taken are given below :-

(i) AMMUNITION DEPOT DAPPAR

Cause of Fire:- The most probable cause of fire was the likelihood of a determined intruder to have carried out the initiation of fire. Follow-up-action: Several effective security measures within the capability of the Depot have been taken both inside and outside the Depot. Cases also have been initiated for authorization of additional Defence Security Corps Platoon, Dog Units, Standby Generators, additional covered accommodation and Fire Fighting trucks. These cases are at various stages of progress.

(ii) AMMUNITION DEPOT BHARATPUR

Cause of Fire:- Findings of the Court of Inquiry on the fire accident at Ammunition Depot Bharatpur are not conclusive about the cause of fire and attributes the fire and subsequent spreading to a possible electric short circuit, high temperatures and the presence of a strong wind. Recommendations of the Court of Inquiry inter alia include

- (i) the need to provide funds for additional covered storage,
- (ii) for each guard post and watch tower to be provided with telephonic communications,
- (iii) in view of threat of short circuiting due to overhead electric cables, in future under ground cabling be resorted to
- (iv) additional mechanical and motorized equipment be provided to remove grass and
- (v) a fresh Board should be convened to re-assess the requirement of fire fighting equipment in view of the additional ammunition holding in the Depot.

Follow-up-action: - Security measures within the capability of the depot have been tightened both inside and outside. Cases have been initiated for augmentation of Defence Security Corps Platoons, Trucks Fire Fighting, relaxation of ban on filling up of vacancies of authorized fire fighting personnel. General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Southern Command has recommended administrative action against nine Army Officers & six Civilian Officers.

(iii) AMMUNITION DEPOT DEHU ROAD.

Cause of Fire: - Grass caught fire due to high temperature and strong winds. Follow-up-action :- There was no loss reported. Action to clear tall grass has already been initiated. Other precautionary measures have also been taken to avoid recurrence.

(iv) CENTRAL ORDNANCE DEPOT, KANPUR:

Court of Inquiry is in progress. Causes of fire, exact losses etc. will be known only on finalization of the Report of the Court of Inquiry.