

12.23 hrs.

**Title:** Regarding fire accident at Ammunition depot, Bharatpur, Rajasthan on 28th April, 2000.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): Sir, the Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur was established during the period 1957-65 and is located approximately 6 kms from Bharatpur town. This Depot holds parts of the Southern Command Reserve and some portions of Army HQrs reserve of ammunition. The Depot was holding approximately 30,000 tonnes of ammunition under both permanent (17,220 metric tonnes) as well as non standard storage (12,700 metric tonnes).

The sequence of events as reported by Army headquarters is as follows:-

- a. The fire had started at approximately 1530 hrs on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2000, from outside the perimeter wall
- b. High temperatures ranging from 45 to 47 degrees celcius and prevailing strong South Westerly winds aided the rapid spread of fire to the open plinths.
- c. The explosion and fire continued unabated throughout the night of 28/29 April, 2000. The periodicity of explosion gradually reduced during the day on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2000. Finally, the fire was brought under control by the evening of 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2000. There has been no explosion since 2200 hours on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2000.
- d. Chief of Staff, Headquarters 1 Corps located at Mathura was tasked to coordinate fire fighting efforts and all available resources at Bharatpur, and additional resources from Alwar, Agra and Mathura were placed at his disposal.

While detailed assessment is being made separately, on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2000, the area was reconnoitered. It is confirmed that ammunition stored in 20 Open Plinths and 9 affected sheds weighing approximately 12111 MT and costing about Rs. 376 crores was lost. In addition, infrastructure of replacement cost of approximately Rs. 13 crores has also been destroyed/damaged. The ammunition in the remaining storage sheds is prima facie safe but this would need confirmation after detailed inspection.

Types of Ammunition Stored in this depot are (a) Air Defence Missiles (b) Anti Tank Guided Missiles (c) Artillery ammunition of all types (d) Tank and BMP ammunition (e) Small Arms ammunition, and (f) Mines and explosives.

As per information available 2 civilians died and 7 were injured. The State Government have been asked by the Ministry for a report on damage to life and property. They are in the process of surveying this damage and have informed the Ministry on 1-5-2000 that their report will be sent in about a week's time. Compensation will be paid for the damages caused within 7 days of receipt of proposal from the Government of Rajasthan. Three Army personnel have also suffered minor injuries.

The following immediate steps have been taken:-

- i. Court of Inquiry under a Major General has been constituted.
- ii. Adequate qualified personnel to inspect remaining ammunition sheds in the depot, have been ordered to be moved.

Existing Security and safety guidelines:-

- a. A broad policy letter regarding precautions to be taken to prevent fire accidents with the onset of summer was issued on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1997 and repromulgated on 17 April, 2000.
- b. Each Ammunition depot has its own security and fire fighting instructions which are updated periodically.
- c. Annual inspections are undertaken by technical as well as administrative Heads.

Between 1996-97 upto 31-3-2000, Rs. 241.73 crores were allocated for building standard storage accommodation. Out of this, Rs. 126.25 was sanctioned in 1999-2000

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...(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : We will now take up the 'Zero Hour'. Shri Vaiko to speak.

...(Interruptions)