

Title: Made a statement on the Railway accident took place on 26.11.98 near Khanna station of Ambala Division on Northern Railway.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): It is with a feeling of utter sorrow and a sense of deepest anguish that I stand today to apprise the House regarding details of an unfortunate side collision of 3152 Dn Jammu Tawi Sealdah Express with derailed coaches of 2903 Up Golden Temple Mail infringing the down line on Ambala-Ludhiana section of Northern Railway's Ambala Division. The collision occurred at about 3.13 hours on 26th November, 1998.

In this accident, as per the latest reports, 209 passengers have lost their lives and 140 passengers had sustained either grievous or simple injuries. In addition, 57 passengers were discharged after rendering first aid. The injured have been admitted to various hospitals in Khanna, Ludhiana and other nearby places and utmost care is being taken to render the best possible medical treatment. The list of dead so far identified and list of injured passengers has been displayed at enquiry booths set up at different locations.

In the early hours of 26th November 1998, 2903 Up Golden Temple Mail passed Khanna station run through on the Up line at 3.10 hours. The train was running 50 minutes behind schedule. At almost the same time, at 3.09 hours, 3152 Dn Jammu Tawi-Sealdah Express passed Chawapail station run through on the Down line. This train was running 18 minutes behind schedule. The block section between Khanna and Chawapail is 10.8 Kms. long and normally it takes each train around seven minutes to cover the block section. Travelling in the opposite direction the two trains would normally cross each other after approximately 3.5 to 4 minutes.

At around 3.13 hours, three minutes after passing Khanna, nine coaches of 2903 Up positioned 10th to 18th from train engine derailed. Of these nine derailed coaches, three coaches in the middle, positioned 14th to 16th from train engine fouled the down line. The front portion of 2903 Up consisting of train engine and first nine coaches came to stop about one kilometre from the site of derailment. It is on record that the Over Head Equipment tripped at around 3.13 hours.

Immediately thereafter, 3152 Dn moving on the down line collided with the derailed coaches and both the driver and the assistant driver of the unfortunate train perished in this accident. The collision resulted in derailment of the Train engine and the first seven coaches of 3152 Dn, some of which were totally mangled.

As soon as information about this accident was received, Medical Relief Vans and Accident Relief Trains from both Ambala and Ludhiana were immediately ordered and rushed to the accident site. The Divisional Railway Manager, Ambala along with doctors and Divisional Officers immediately proceeded to the site of accident. General Manager, Northern Railway along with his Principal Heads of Department also left for the accident site to supervise rescue and relief operations

Soon after learning about this unfortunate accident, I along with the Chief Minister of Punjab, accompanied by Chairman Railway Board, Member Engineering, Member Mechanical and other senior officers of Railway Board visited the site of the accident for making an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. I would like to place on record the outstanding contribution of the State Government of Punjab and all their agencies, the units of the Army and Air Force that were based nearby, numerous Non-Government Organisations who rushed in to help with men, material and money, and last but not the least, inhabitants of nearby villages, who rendered yeomen service in selflessly assisting the Railways in this hour of grief.

While money cannot compensate the next of kin for the irreparable loss suffered by the death of their near and dear ones, ex-gratia payments of Rs.25,000 for deceased passengers, Rs.5,000 to the grievously injured and Rs.2000 to those who sustained simple injuries have been made. Compensation as admissible will be paid to them by the Railway Claims Tribunal. This amount varies from Rs.32,000 to Rs.4 lakh based on the extent of incapacitation due to injuries and Rs.4 lakh in case of death.

Usually in case of serious train accidents, inquiry is conducted by The Commissioner of Railway Safety. However, keeping in mind the gravity of this particular accident, the inquiry in this case is being conducted by he and works under the Ministry of Civil Aviation. However, it has now been decided that a judicial inquiry under the Commission of Inquiries Act will be conducted. While the precise cause of the accident would be established after the inquiry report is received, prima facie the cause of the derailment appears to be material failure.

On behalf of the Railways and myself, I express deep condolences to the bereaved families and also express sincere sympathies to the injured. I trust the House will join me in extending heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, there should be a discussion on this...

(Interruptions)

श्री रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली): इस पर बहस होनी चाहिए।

... (व्यवधान)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, we have already given a notice under rule 193 on this...(Interruptions)

श्री रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : ऐसे मामले पर मंत्री जी त्यागपत्र देते हैं। ... (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय: क्या सबको त्यागपत्र देना है?

... (व्यवधान)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, are you allowing a discussion on this?...(Interruptions)

श्री नीतीश कुमार: डिस्कशन पर हम लोगों को कोई ऐतराज नहीं है।

... (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Mulayam Singh, there are two Motions for Elections to Committees. After these two Motions are moved, I shall give you the chance.
