

a point of order. It is not an ordinary incident. It occurred due to the failure of the Railway Administration and a large number of passengers were burnt to death in this incident.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order in it. Please take your seat. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: A mere statement from the Minister would not be sufficient in view of the seriousness of the matter which requires discussion. If it not possible to discuss in any other form, this must be discussed atleast under Rule 193. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

It is a very serious matter.

MR. SPEAKER: Please listen to the Minister. Now please take your seat.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI TASLIMUDIN (Purnea): The accident took place due to the lapse on the part of the Railways and about 2007 persons have lost their lives in it.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: You are from Bihar; please listen to the Minister with all seriousness. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Now take your seat.

SHRISATYANARAYANJATIA (Ujjain): I will take just half a minute.

MR. SPEAKER: No, please sit down. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri George Fernan-

des.

12.32 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Accident due to fire in 383 up Mokama-Danapur passenger train on 16.4.1990 on the Danapur division of Eastern Railway

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that yesterday I had briefly mentioned the accident due to fire involving 383 Up Mokama-Danapur passenger train between Gulzarbagh and Patna on the Mokama-Danapur section of the Eastern Railway which occurred at about 9.40 hours.

With profound grief, I apprise the House that due to a major fire that broke out in the 7th coach from the train engine, as many as 72 passengers lost their lives and 65 were injured, of whom 16 have since been discharged after treatment.

While the train was on run between Gulzarbagh and Patna junction, the gateman at a level crossing gate about 2 Kms. from Gulzarbagh noticed a coach on fire and advised the staff at the Block hut ahead to stop the train. The train was brought to a stop at about Km. 539.04 which is about 1 Km. ahead of the level crossing gate where the fire was first noticed.

Immediately on receipt of information about the fire, the Patna Fire Brigade was advised and the first fire tender reached the site at 10.05 hours and the fire was extinguished at 10.12 hours.

The Additional Divisional Railway Manager with a medical team left Danapur by

road at 10.10 hours and arrived the site at 10.50 hours. The District Civil and Police officials and medical teams from the local hospitals also rushed to the site of accident. The injured were taken to Nalanda medical College Hospitals, Patna, the Patna Medical College Hospitals and Danapur Railway Hospital for treatment.

The Chief Minister, Bihar, visited the site of the accident.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

12.34 hrs.

I flew to the site of the accident from Delhi and visited the injured in the hospitals and also went to the mortuary. I was accompanied by the Member Electrical, Railway Board.

Ex-gratia relief to the kith and kin of the dead who have been identified and to the injured is being arranged. Although no amount of money can really compensate for the immense suffering, I have doubled the ex-gratia amount payable to the kith and kin of the dead and to the injured in this accident. Compensation to the dependents of the passengers killed and to the injured will be decided by the Railway Claims Tribunal bench at Patna which is a judicial body.

I am fully aware of the concern of the House at the macabre tragedy and I too know that the House would like to be informed about the cause of this terrible accident. There have been several conflicting versions about the probable cause of this accident and I would certainly not like to hazard a guess. However, it may be mentioned that a gas cylinder was found in the coach which had caught fire. The cylinder has been handed over by the police to the Forensic Laboratory, Patna for investigation. At 11.30 hrs I received information that the General Manager, Eastern Railway met

the Director of the Forensic Laboratory, Dr. S.R. Hasan who has said that the investigations so far have shown that the cylinder was leaking. The cylinder contained either oxygen or acetylene, both of which are highly combustible. The formal report of the Forensic Laboratory is still awaited. The Commissioner of Railway Safety, Northern Circle, will be holding a statutory inquiry into this accident.

I am still reeling under the magnitude of the tragedy and suffering caused. In order to avoid recurrence of such accidents an all-India educational drive has been mounted against the carriage of explosive and inflammable materials in passenger carrying trains.

All railway workers and I, extend our heartfelt condolences to the kith and kin of those who lost their lives and sincere sympathies to the injured in this unfortunate accident.

I am sure the House joins us in extending heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.

In my Budget speech, I had mentioned that the amount of compensation payable to the victims of train accidents will be doubled when the new Railways Act comes into force from 1st July, 1990. Under the present Act of 1890, the maximum amount payable in the case of death is Rs. 1 lakh. As per rules, the amount payable to the injured ranges from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 1 lakh per person. This law will continue to apply till 30th June, 1990, and, therefore, the Railway Claims Tribunal will award compensation as per the existing law.

I have, however, decided that in cases of all train accidents which have occurred on or after 1st April, 1990, in addition to the amount of compensation awarded by the Railway Claims Tribunal under the existing Railways Act of 1890, the Railways would

[Sh. George Fernandes]

make an additional payment of equal amount as *ex-gratia* payment under administrative orders. Thus, where the Railway Claims Tribunal awards a claim of Rs. 1 lakh, an additional amount of Rs. 1 lakh will be paid by the railway administration. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM (Sivaganga): After a Minister's Statement the other House allows to put questions but here questions are not allowed. By making a Statement, you cannot pre-empt a discussion. There must be some way to discuss a Statement because more information has been given in the newspapers than what the hon. Minister has given. What was the gas cylinder doing in the passengers' compartment? Why was the alarm chain not working? (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have made your point. The matter will be discussed by the hon. Speaker in the Business Advisory Committee also. Whether you would like to have it discussed as Calling Attention or under Rule 193—which one is suitable or whether it can be discussed or cannot be discussed—all these issues will be discussed by the Hon. Speaker in the Business Advisory Committee.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: When the Government has agreed to discuss it, where is the question of not discussing it?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am not pre-empting the Hon. Speaker's decision.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: But the question is how do we discuss it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That, we will decide.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have

made your point. I have that it will be discussed and the matter rests there only.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAMESHWAR PRASAD (Arrah): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the fact is that the fire-brigade reached the scene after one hour and not after twenty five minutes as stated here. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You please take your seat. In so far as discussion on the accident is concerned, many Members have expressed their desire to speak. The decision as to how the matter could be discussed in the House, is to be taken by hon. Speaker. It is he who is to decide the mode of discussion.

[*English*]

I am not giving any decision here. Because we have to consider the business which is before the House tomorrow also as to how it can be adjusted and all those things. For the business tomorrow, the authority to decide would be a different authority. I am leaving the doors open for all of you to come together and decide as to how you discuss it.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: There is no Business Advisory Committee meeting today. Please tell us whether the Business Advisory Committee meeting will be convened today.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am not giving any ruling on this thing. I am not passing any orders. Let it be considered by the Speaker.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Please tell us whether the Business Advisory Committee will meet today. As it is, it is only meeting tomorrow. (*Interruptions*)

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re. fire in 383up Mokama
Danapur pass. train*

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SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: You can direct them to have it on the same day. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You please understand that there is no difficulty if the Business Advisory Committee has to be called. If the hon. Speaker thinks that it has to be called, it can be called. But I am not passing any orders here. I am leaving it open. You please discuss it with him. The House has taken note that you are concerned and you want to discuss it. But don't get an order from me for the business tomorrow.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY (Katwa): Even without BAC, we can take it up tomorrow. We will be happy, if he decides about the date, maybe tomorrow.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: We can discuss it tomorrow. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Wardha): Please allow me to make a submission. You know the concern of the House. The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs is here. Fortunately, the Minister for Railways is also here. The entire House is very seriously concerned. If we want a discussion on this at the earliest, that can only be tomorrow.

Sir, Business Advisory Committee after all is a Committee of the House. So, we are all here—I am sure the hon. Speaker will have no objection—and if the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs agrees for tomorrow we can have a discussion under Rule 193 on this. The entire House is one on this Please agree to that. Let the Minister agree to it. (*Interruptions*)

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. UPENDRA): Sir, I will discuss it with the Speaker. We have no objection for a discus-

sion. Let the Speaker decide the time.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please understand that I had taken note of your feelings and I had kept it so open as to facilitate a discussion. If you have grasped what I had said, there would not have been any difficulty.

12.44 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Reported discontentment among the people affected by Narmada Dam Project and steps taken by Government to resolve the issues involved

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri Ram Naik.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Bombay North): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Water Resources to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:—

"the reported discontentment among the people affected by the Narmada Dam Project in the States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat and the steps taken by the Government to resolve the issues involved."

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI MANUBHAI KOTADIA): There have been reports about some discontentment among the people likely to be affected by the Narmada Sagar and Sardar Sarovar Dam Projects. Some representations have also been received by the Government.