

As in the 1986-87 season, State Co-operative Marketing Agencies have been authorised to purchase pulses during 1987-88 if offered at the minimum support price with the assurance that NAFED would lift the pulses so purchased, should the State Agencies be unable to market the same within the State.

It has been the endeavour of the Government to provide incentives to the farmers to step up the production and productivity of oilseeds. Accordingly the minimum support price of Groundnut-in-Shell of 1987-88 crop has been fixed at Rs. 390 per quintal, marking an increase of Rs. 20 per quintal over the previous year's level.

The minimum support price of Soyabean (Yellow) of 1987-88 crop shall be Rs. 300 per quintal as against Rs. 290 for the last year. The minimum support price of Soyabean (Black) has been increased by Rs. 5 and fixed at Rs. 260 per quintal for the 1987-88 season.

We are keen to provide encouragement and incentives to the farmers for taking up and expanding the cultivation of new and upcoming oilseeds. Accordingly the minimum support price of Sunflower of 1987-88 crop has been fixed at Rs. 390 per quintal which marks a substantial increase of Rs. 40 per quintal over the price fixed for the previous year.

I am sure that the incentives offered by the Government in terms of a substantial increase in minimum support prices will enthuse our farmers to achieve rapid increases in productivity and production of oilseeds and pulses.

12.13 hrs.

STATEMENT REGARDING THE ACCIDENT TO MADRAS EGMORE-TIRUCHCHIRAPPALLI ROCKFORT EXPRESS ON
15 MARCH, 1987

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): Sir, I deeply

regret to apprise the House of an unfortunate accident to 177 Down Madras Egmore-Tiruchchirappalli Rockfort Express at about 4.45 hrs on 15.3.1987. While the train was running over Marudaiyar Bridge between Ariyalur and Sillakkudi stations on the Madras-Tiruchchirappalli metre gauge single line section of Southern Railway, the locomotive and the first eight coaches derailed, three coaches falling into the dry river bed. Nine coaches remained on the track, six on the bridge and the last three outside it. The load of the train was 17 coaches.

As a result of this accident, 25 persons lost their lives. Among the dead were 13 railway employees, including the engine crew. 45 persons suffered grievous injuries and 94 simple injuries.

The General Manager of Southern Railway who was travelling by the same train, immediately supervised the relief and rescue operations. Medical relief was rushed from Ariyalur, Thanjavur and Tiruchchirappalli in co ordination with the civil administration. Senior officers of Southern Railway from Madras and those from the Divisional Office in Tiruchchirappalli rushed to the site of the accident. I, accompanied by Member (Traffic), Railway Board and Director General, Railway Protection Force, left for the site, inspected the place of accident and visited the injured in the hospitals. Ex-gratia payment to the next of kin of those who lost their lives and had been identified, as also to those who were injured has been arranged.

Commissioner of Railway Safety, Southern Circle will hold a statutory enquiry into the accident.

Prima facie cause of the accident is sabotage. A very powerful explosive appeared to have been used to damage the bridge. A 75-metre wire was found connected to the place where the explosion occurred. It appears to have been a wanton act of terrorism with the intent to cause loss of lives of innocent citizens. As a preventive measure, I have ordered further patrolling of tracks and guarding of important bridges in certain identified areas. I am sure all Members will join me in condemning this senseless and wanton act of violence in which the lives of innocents were cruelly forfeited.