

[Shri G.S. Dhillon]

condolences and deep sympathies to the bereaved families.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the assistance rendered in the rescue and relief operations by the civil administration, the people of the adjoining areas, various industrial establishments and other public and private bodies, as well as by several volunteers from amongst the passengers of the train. I must make a special mention of the heroic role played by some Army jawans travelling by the same train.

The accident to 316 Down Barharwa-Rampurhat passenger on the Eastern Railway occurred at about 13.10 hours on 27.7.87. While the train was passing over bridge No. 201 between Murarai and Chhatra stations on the Barharwa-Khana Section, 2 bogies derailed and 3 came off the bridge of which two fell into the river bed. The train had a load of 7 coaches. This is an 18 span bridge on the Chhota Pagla stream.

As a result of the accident, 3 persons lost their lives. There were 7 grievous injuries and 27 minor. The injured were rushed to the Civil Hospital, Rampurhat and to the Health Centres at Chhatra and Murarai. On receipt of the information, medical vans were rushed to the site of the accident from the base stations. Senior officers of the Railway also rushed to the site. Ex-gratia payment to the next of kin of the dead and to those injured has been arranged.

The cause of the accident is under investigation. Commissioner of Railway Safety, Eastern Circle, has already reached the site and will be holding Statutory Enquiry.

16.21 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: MACHINERY FOR ENSURING SAFEGUARDS FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE

MINISTRY OF WELFARE (DR. RAJENDRA KUMARI BAJPAI): Sir, the Constitution provides under Article 338 for appointing a Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided under the Constitution for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Government of India in 1978 had set up a Commission to do practically the same functions with the intention of replacing the Special Officer by such a Commission by amending the Constitution. However, the efforts of the Government at that time to amend the Constitution in this respect did not succeed. As a result the Commission and the Commissioner have been functioning with almost similar functions.

We have examined this matter carefully. Government does not propose to make any changes in the Constitution in this regard. Instead we would like to make the Constitutional machinery of Special Officer envisaged under Article 338 more effective and hence we shall strengthen his office and also provide for a disciplinary mechanism to take action against defaulting personnel.

We have need also of a body at the national level to aid and advise the Government in regard to the basic socio-economic issues involved in the process of uplift and welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Changing situations demand that all the aspects should be carefully studied and suitable changes in policy and programme and in administrative structure and agencies effected to meet new requirements. It is hence proposed to rename the Commission for the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and redefine its functions and to expand it to include experts in relevant disciplines.

A detailed statement in this respect is placed on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-4522-A/87]