

STATEMENT RE. RECENT MAJOR
TRAIN ACCIDENTS

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI KEDAR PANDEY): Sir, I beg
to lay on the Table a statement re-
garding:

(i) Accident to 416 Dn. Passenger
between Badalaghat and Dhamara-
ghat stations of N.E. Railway on
6-6-1981.

(ii) A collision between 1 KCR
goods and 33 Dn. Passenger be-
tween Bhanwar Tonk and Khongsara
stations of S.E. Railway on 16-7-
1981.

(iii) Derailment of 1 Up Delhi
Mail between Ambliyan Junction
and Dangarwa stations of Western
Railway on 18-7-1981.

STATEMENT

Sir, with deep anguish I apprise the House of three major train accidents which occurred during the recess period of Parliament. The first of these accidents took place between Badla Ghat and Dhamara Ghat stations of North Eastern Railway on the 6th June. In this accident 7 coaches of 416 Dn. Passenger fell down into the river Bagmati resulting in 270 known deaths and injuries to 125 persons. Immediately after the receipt of information I visited the site of the accident along with my senior officers, supervised the rescue operations and also visited the injured in the hospitals. In the second accident a goods train collided with the rear of 33Dn. Fast Passenger between Bhanwar Tonk and Khongsara stations of South Eastern Railway on the 16th July. As a result of this accident, 50 persons lost their lives and 80 were injured. The third accident, i.e. the derailment of 1 Up Delhi Mail between Ambliyan and Dangarwa stations of Western Railway on the 18th July was responsible for the

death of 31 persons and injuries to 79. Both these places were immediately visited by my colleague Shri Mallikarjun along with the senior officers.

There were two other accidents in which 8 persons were killed and 67 injured.

All these accidents, indeed every single accident is a matter of serious concern to me and all railwaymen as it is to the general public. Every accident is viewed seriously and enquired into thoroughly not only to punish the guilty but also to ascertain the cause and to take measures necessary to prevent recurrence of similar accidents. Recently a lot has been said in this regard blaming the Railways for the accidents. I would, therefore, crave the indulgence of the House to view Railway accidents in proper perspective.

As the Hon'ble Member are aware, there are over a million and a half railwaymen working round the clock in varying conditions and with equipment of varying degree of complexity to keep the wheels moving over the gigantic network on the Indian Railways. Even before a train starts from a station, during its journey and after it reaches destination it has to be dealt with continuously by numerous railway staff on whose vigilance and efficient performance of assigned duties depends its safety. There are checks and counter checks prescribed. Yet, it is truly said that the best safety device is a careful man. Vigilance of staff averts many potential accidents. The Railway Accidents Committee, 1962 had observed that the staff who were responsible for accidents constituted only 0.13 per cent of the total number of staff on the Indian Railways.

The Hon'ble Members are aware that the Government, in their quest for safety, appointed three High Powered Committees to examine the problem of accidents on Railways in its entirety and suggest remedial measures. The Committee were headed by

[Shri Kedar Pandey]

Dr. H. N. Kunzru (1962), Justice K. N. Wanchoo (1968) and Justice S. M. Sikri (1978). These Committees made many useful suggestions which were implemented.

The number of train accidents which took place on the Indian Railways in 1960-61 was 2131. This number came down in the last two decades and during 1980-81 it stood at 1013, declining by 52.6 per cent. The incidence of accidents bears a direct relationship to the volume of traffic handled which is by and large, reflected in the total train-kilometres run. The incidence of train accidents per million train kilometres came down from 5.5 in 1960-61 to 2.2 in 1980-81, representing reduction of 60 per cent.

The Hon'ble Members must have noticed from the pamphlet "A Review of Accidents on Indian Government Railways" presented to Parliament every year that the incidence of train accidents had been coming down steadily till 1973-74 when there were 782 train accidents. Thereafter, the incidence of accidents shot upto 925 in 1974-75 and further to 964 in 1975-76. In the next year i.e. 1976-77 there was a marked improvement and the number of train accidents came down to 780. The reasons for the sharp rise during 1974-75 and 1975-76 were the after effect of country-wide strike by railwaymen and unsettled conditions of working in the country which had affected the maintenance of railway assets and discipline amongst the railwaymen. Thereafter, the position improved significantly and the number of train accidents came down to 780 in 1976-77, in which year our performance was wholesome in all areas.

Unfortunately the standard of efficiency attained by 1976-77 could not be sustained for various reasons. The

law and order situation deteriorated; discipline, quality of service and maintenance of railway assets suffered and the number of train accidents started rising since 1977-78.

Due to difficult ways and means position, there have been heavy arrears in the renewal of railway assets, i.e. track, rolling stock, etc. Vandalism and thefts are other factors which aggravated the ill effects. We are concentrating on pulling up the arrears, and our current Five Year Plan is intended to be a rehabilitation plan; about 50 per cent of the allocation will be spent on replacement of assets.

My purpose of saying all this is only to bring out the back-ground. There is not the least sense of complacency in the matter of accidents. The crusade against accidents is a continuous one. We cannot afford to relax at any moment and are anxiously trying to reverse the ugly trend.

I have already submitted that railway safety is ultimately in the hands of the large number of railwaymen who are responsible for operations. Since the majority of the train accidents is ultimately traceable to the failure of human element, Safety Organisation on the Railways has been carrying out intensive safety campaign to ensure that the staff do not violate rules or indulge in short cut methods that may lead to accidents. Great emphasis is laid on proper training of staff. Psycho-technical tests have been evolved to assess the skills and abilities essential for safe working. These tests were being applied as an integral part of recruitment for some safety categories of staff.

As the Hon'ble Members are aware, to help the staff perform their duties

safely and efficiently, various technological aids such as interlocking, track circuiting, axle counters, route relay interlocking, automatic warning system, ultrasonic flaw detectors, multiple aspect and colour light signals are being provided to the extent feasible.

Since failure of equipment also accounts for quite a large number of derailments, train examination and spot checks in Train Examining Depots and Workshops, etc. have been intensified. Rolling Stock which require greater attention is being segregated from the rest so that concerted attention could be paid to the rolling stock requiring closer attention at frequent intervals.

More funds have been allocated for track renewals in 1981-82. Measures like directed track maintenance, measured shovel packing, machine maintenance, welding of rail joints have also been taken to improve track maintenance.

There is a comprehensive system of inspections, by officials of all levels to see that the prescribed rules and procedures are followed in day to day working. In addition to the regular inspections, surprise inspections both by day and night are made. Orders have been issued that General Managers accompanied by Heads of Departments will carry out special safety inspections of all trunk routes by November, 1981. The preparatory work in the field has been started.

A special Safety Team comprising Joint Directors from various disciplines has been constituted recently under the direct charge of the Railway Board. This team carries out field checks and appraises the senior management levels of zonal Railways on one hand and the Members of the Board on the other. The unfortunate trend of accidents is being reviewed at special Board Meetings.

In the end I would like to assure the House that to avoid accidents no efforts are being spared and the safety

measures are being intensified to the fullest extent.

With your permission, Sir, I lay on the Table of the Sabha a statement giving details of the five accidents.

STATEMENT CONTAINING DETAILS OF FIVE SERIOUS TRAIN ACCIDENTS REFERRED TO IN THE SUO MOTO STATEMENT MADE BY THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS IN THE PARLIAMENT ON 17-8-1981.

1. Accident to 416 Dn. Passenger between Badla Ghat and Dhamara Ghat stations of N. E. Railway on 6-6-1981.

On 6-6-1981 at about 16.50 hours while 416 Dn. Passenger train with a load of 9 coaches was negotiating the girder bridge No. 51 between Badla Ghat and Dhamara Ghat stations of North Eastern Railway, its rearmost seven coaches which included 4 second class coaches, one first class coach, one parcel van and a second class-cum-luggage and brake-van fell into the river Bagmati

In this accident 270 persons are known to have lost their lives—268 bodies were recovered from the river and 2 persons died in the hospital. Another 34 persons sustained grievous injuries and 66 sustained simple injuries. In addition, 25 persons sustained trivial injuries.

On receipt of the information of the accident through a passenger of the train who contacted A.S.M., Dhamara Ghat at 17.30 hours, Medical Relief Vans and Breakdown trains were rushed from Saharsa, Barauni and Samastipur.

Assistance of Army, Navy, Air Force and Civil authorities was also requisitioned. Thirty-eight naval divers, assisted by army boats, local boats, Civil authorities and railway breakdown equipment carried out rescue operations round the clock. Some of the bodies were buried in the silt and also under the submerged

[Shri Kedar Panday]

coaches. The naval divers used a few controlled explosive charges to accelerate the process of recovery. After having searched all the submerged coaches thoroughly and the area within ten metres around these coaches, when the naval authorities had satisfied themselves that there were no more dead bodies, they wound up their operations in the afternoon on 12-6-1981. Before that they had made search for dead bodies upto 5 kilometres down stream also.

Railway Minister and Chairman, Railway Board, Member Mechanical, Member Staff, Director Civil Engineering and other Railway Officers reached the site of the accident by air on 7-6-1981 at 12.10 hours. The Deputy Minister for Railways and Parliamentary Affairs and Member Engineering also visited the site to supervise salvage operations.

Chief of the Naval Staff alongwith G.O.C-in-C, Central Command visited the site of the accident and directed the operations.

Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety, who is an independent statutory authority functioning under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, himself held an enquiry into this accident. Normally, such a statutory enquiry is conducted by the Commissioner for the Circle concerned. He has submitted his Preliminary Report to Government in which he has mentioned that at the time of accident the weather was stormy, visibility restricted and the speed of the train of the order of 25 to 30 KMPH. About the occupancy of the train about which there has been lot of speculation, the Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety after taking into account the evidence tendered by the passengers of the ill fated train, civil and police officials, railway officials and the checks conducted by the Commissioner, came to the conclusion that about a thousand passengers

might have been on the train when it left Badla Ghat.

As for the number of persons missing, the Chief Commissioner has mentioned that according to the District Magistrate, Khargaria, 364 persons had been registered at the accident site up to 14-6-1981 as missing and that it was possible that some more may have been listed at other places including the police stations.

The report further mentions that on account of the susceptibility to heavy scour, this bridge is classified as vulnerable and watchmen are brought into position on 16th June, before 'advent of monsoon'. The track geometry on the bridge and its neighbourhood as also the condition of the components are adequate for the speed and the axle load permitted on this section.

The provisional finding of the Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety is that the accident "was the result of the disturbances set up on the train in the wake of the sudden application of brakes acting in conjunction with a stormy gale blowing from the left which was adequate to destabilise the train in that state and overturn seven of its coaches (3rd to 9th) which had parted from the others." He has attributed this accident to combination of factors—human and natural.

2. A collision between 1 KCR Goods Train and 33 Down Passenger between Bhanwar Tonk and Khongsara stations of S. E. Railway on 16-7-1981.

The second accident took place between Bhanwar Tonk and Khongsara stations of South Eastern Railway on 16-7-1981. At about 16.15 hours, train No. 1 KCR Goods was held up between Khodri and Bhanwar Tonk stations due to engine failure. Consequently, 33 Down Passenger train was despatched from Khodri to Bhanwar Tonk stations at 18.15 hours on the Up line. Meanwhile, 1 KCR Goods also started moving. It is

reported that the goods train passed the next station Bhanwar Tonk without line clear at about 19.03 hours and collided with the rear of 33 Down Passenger train which was running on the proper line between Bhanwar Tonk and Khongsara stations.

As a result, three rear-most coaches of Passenger train were badly damaged. The remaining five coaches and the steam engine, however, remained on the rails; 21 wagons of Goods Train got derailed.

In this accident 50 persons were killed, 23 sustained grievous injuries and 28 simple injuries. In addition, 29 persons sustained trivial injuries.

On receipt of the information, Medical Van from Bilaspur was rushed to the site. The General Manager, South Eastern Railway accompanied by other Officers proceeded to the site by a special train.

Deputy Minister for Railways and Parliamentary Affairs accompanied by Chairman and Member Mechanical, Railway Board also visited the site.

The accident according to the provisional finding of Commissioner of Railway Safety is attributable to failure of Railway Staff.

3. *Derailement of 1 UP Delhi Mail between Ambliyan Jn. and Dangarwa stations of Western Railway on 18-7-81.*

The third accident took place between Ambliyan and Dangarwa stations of Western Railway on 18-7-81. At about 20.23 hours on that day while 1 Up Delhi Mail with a load of 18 coaches was running between Ambliyan and Dangarwa stations, the train engine along with 12 coaches next to it derailed of which 3 coaches capsized.

In this accident 31 persons were killed, 26 sustained grievous injuries and 30 simple injuries. In addition, 23 persons sustained only trivial injuries like minor bruises.

On receipt of information, breakdown trains and Medical Relief Vans were despatched from Mehsana, Sabarmati and Abu Road. A number of local doctors also reached the site of the accident. Injured persons were sent to Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad and Kalol.

General Manager of the Railway along with other Senior Officers and Commissioner of Railway Safety rushed to the site of accident. Deputy Minister for Railways and Parliamentary Affairs accompanied by Member Mechanical, Railway Board reached by air to ensure adequacy of relief and medical arrangements. They visited the injured in the Hospitals.

This accident has also been inquired into by the Commissioner of Railway Safety. According to his provisional finding the derailment was the result of deliberate tampering with the track by person or persons unknown.

The Police have registered this case under Section 126 of the Indian Railways Act and Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code. They arrested four gangmen on 30-7-1981.

4. *Derailement of 2 PG Passenger at Patna station of Eastern Railway on 23-7-1981.*

On 23-7-1981, at about 10.03 hours, while 2 PG Passenger was entering platform No. 6 at Patna Station, 7 coaches next to the engine derailed. As a result of the accident, 3 persons were killed and 28 injured of whom 12 sustained grievous injuries.

This accident has been inquired into by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Calcutta. According to his provisional finding the accident was due to failure of railway staff.

5. *Collision between 82 Up Passenger and the rear portion of Kota Special between Rvphas and Fatehpur Sikri stations of Western Railway on 8-8-1981.*

[Shri Kedar Pandey]

On 8-8-1981, Kota Special Goods which passed Rupbas station at 21.55 hours was divided between Rupbas and Bansi Paharpur stations as the engine was unable to pull the load. The driver brought the front divided portion to Bansi Paharpur at 22.25 hours. Thereafter, the engine left for the site to bring the rear divided portion. In the meantime, the rear divided portion started rolling back and after passing through Rupbas station, collided with 82 Up Passenger which had left Fatehpur Sikri.

In this accident, 5 persons were killed and 6 sustained grievous injuries. In addition, 39 persons sustained simple injuries

The cause of the accident is under investigation by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Bombay.

Ex-gratia relief has been given to next of kin of the dead and to the injured in all these cases.

Compensation under the Railway Accident (Compensation) Rules, 1950 will be paid as awarded by the *Ad hoc* Claims Commissioner/Ex-Officio Claims Commissioners. For the accident on North Eastern Railway the Bihar Government has been requested to nominate a High Court Judge to act as *Ad hoc* Claims Commissioner. Recommendations for appointment of *Ad hoc* Claims Commissioners for the other two major accidents are awaited.

14.36 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. INDIA'S DISCUSSIONS FOR DRAWINGS FROM INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN): Mr. Speaker, the question of India drawing on the resources of the International Monetary Fund has generated

widespread interest in the country. I would, therefore, like to inform the House of the present position of this matter.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was set up to promote international monetary cooperation, to facilitate the expansion and balanced growth of international trade, to promote exchange stability, to make available the general resources of the Fund on a temporary basis under adequate safeguards to enable member countries to correct maladjustments in their balance of payments. In the pursuit of these objectives the IMF extends loans to its members which have a balance of payments problem and require temporary assistance to make appropriate adjustments. As a member of the Fund, India has been taking advantage of the various Fund facilities from time to time whenever the need for balance of payments adjustments had made it necessary.

Hon'ble Members are aware that as a result of the increase in oil prices over the past two years, our balance of payments position has come under a heavy strain. Besides, unavoidable imports of crude oil and petroleum products, we have to import necessary machinery and equipment for the Sixth Plan, which envisages a massive investment in the infrastructure and industry. Large amounts of foreign exchange are required for this purpose. To meet the balance of payments situation, we are making concerted efforts to increase exports and also raise production in industries where we have comparative advantage. Hon. Members are aware that the Sixth Five Year Plan envisages an investment of Rs. 97,500 crores in the public sector. This investment outlay is to be financed through domestic savings and net inflow of large amounts of external resources. Efforts are being made to raise necessary External resources by maximising assistance from bilateral and multi-lateral institutions and also by resorting to borrowing in the capital markets abroad. In the last year we