

with the Speaker and not just take pleasure in thinking that they are standing up and saying something.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, if you like, you can initiate the discussion. We have no objection.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I thank the Hon. Members for this kind of cooperation. I would immediately take up, not as an Adjournment Motion, but as a discussion under Rule 193. Somebody asked me, 'Under what Rule are you doing it? The procedure is, when a Statement is made by the Hon. Minister, we just discuss that Statement. Now we have taken up the discussion. I will request Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji. Please, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji, bear with me. I am probably committing some offence against your fine sense of procedure and all those things.

Again, I am asking you to start the debate under Rule 193 on this issue so that the Members also would speak. This is agreed by all that we may not... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : It is not necessary now. Everybody is agreeing. Let us cooperate. You will start it. Shri Somnath Chatterjee will speak. Then, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan will speak and others will also speak. Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, I am sorry for this kind of a thing.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I rise to say that this whole discussion should be conducted under the adjournment motion then what will happen.

(Interruptions) I am not saying so.

MR. SPEAKER : Vajpayeeji, you are not saying that but sometimes you say so to create an embarrassing situation. But whatever you had said, was to find some way out. Even then if everyone agrees, I would like to request you that you should not have any objection.

11.57 hrs.

DISCUSSIONS UNDER RULE 193

Train Accident Involving Puru Hottam Express and Kalindi Express Near Firozabad.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Lucknow) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon. Prime Minister has given statement regarding the train-accident. The Hon. Railway Minister is not present in the country. The hon Prime Minister is looking after the Railway Ministry also. This fact has

become more clear after this accident that this system is not satisfactory and the division of the responsibilities in the Government is not proper. Now, when the Hon. Prime Minister is holding the charge of Ministry of Railway and giving statement on behalf of the Hon. Railway Minister. Then the country and we people also were expecting that he would visit the site of the accident and express his grief and console the injured and dependents of the people who died in the accident but only Mallikarjun ji had gone there and we do not have his report before us.

As I had said in the beginning that it is the worst accident ever happened. Such accidents might have occurred earlier also. There are three aspects of this accident- the one is related to the facts as to what has happened there. It has been highlighted in the statement of the Government and the newspapers also have given some information. Our friends Shri Katariaji and Rawat ji had gone there, they would like to submit some more facts before the House. A train was already stationed there at the station when the other hit it. Hundreds of people have died. I will take up this aspect later on as to why different data regarding those who have died have been given by the ruling party and the opposition in the house. I was saying the other thing, the facts are facts and these will be discussed. Whether a lowest rank employee was at fault or some signalman committed a mistake, when one train was already at the station for one and half hours then why the information regarding that was not given? What was the difficulty in it? These facts will continue to be discussed, these should be brought to the light and it is necessary to know these facts.

12.00 hrs.

But there is one other aspect that during the last few years there has been phenomenal increase in the railway accidents. I would not like to recount these. Today, the newspapers have given date-wise and year-wise details of these accidents. Since 7th January, 1991 when an accidents took place in Calcutta, these accidents have been taking place continuously. About 15-16 big accidents have already taken place. Before this session comes to an end, another tragic accident may take place. The question is as to why the number of accidents have increased and it should be replied to.

The railway claims, and there is no reason to accept this claim that electrification, mechanisation and computerisation is being done. Steps have been taken to avert the accidents. We claim to have made progress in the field of science and technology but these accidents could not be checked by using these and perhaps this is not possible also. I would like to ask as to whether their number cannot be reduced? It is the question of the whole Railway Machinery. It becomes necessary to discuss all those issues which relate to providing of facilities to Railways and the steps to be taken by it.

When any accident takes place, we order for two types of inquiries. Sometimes a judicial enquiry is

conducted or sometime the inspector of railway safety does this work and its report comes. Our complaint is that the whole of the report is not published, only 1-2 paragraphs are published. What happens to these recommendations, the House as well as the nation does not know anything about those.

I remember the day, when Shri Jagjivan Ram used to be the Railway Minister. The number of accidents had increased and I was speaking on the railway budget, I had said that there was so much insecurity in the railway that if a passenger boarded the train, he left the hope of this world and the life aside and only remembered the name of Rama. It is an incident of years back, these days accidents are common. The moto safe railway is levelled. Safe travel is the responsibility of the railway. Now neither the railway administration can run away from its responsibility nor the Hon. Prime Minister can satisfy us by saying that blue bull or buffalo hit the train, the engine went out of order and the driver had to stop the train. I can very well understand that a blue bull can hit the train and it is out of the control of the Government but how the blue bull reached there, it is also a question. (Interruption)

SHRI SHARAD YADAV (Madhepura) : It is not blue bull Atal ji, it is blue-horse.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Even if you say it was a donkey, I am ready to accept that even. (Interruptions)

SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT (Agra) : The Hon. Member is on the wrong. It is not blue horse but the blue bull, I myself had gone there and saw it.... (Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : He does not want to make a mention of cow. He is paying regards to your sentiments. You should thank him.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, an animal was roaming there, it hit the train, animals can not be stopped. These animals do not understand that they should not hit the train run by the Government and they will have to sacrifice their life by hitting the train. It is an other aspect. But I would like to know that when the blue bull hit the train, the railway engine went out of order and the train had to stop for one and half hour, if this fact is wrong then I would like to know the reality, when the train stopped for one and half hours, then whether it was thought, or arrangements were made or the steps were taken that the Purushottam Express which is a fast running train should be stopped then and there and if it is not stopped a major accident can take place. This issue is related to the facts and it is a question mark on the entire system of railway. Cannot we stop such an accident? What sort of progress we are claiming to have made and what is the use of saying that the trains should run in time? This question is concerned with the system. But I would like to emphasise on one thing and that is the accountability. The accident took place and more than 300 people died. Earlier also the accidents had taken place. Some Ministers resign and some other

do not do so. It is not the accountability of the Hon. Minister only but of the Government. The Government is accountable to the House. It is accountable to the railway passengers. If such a big accident takes place then what is the morality and what is the justification of constitutional morality, the House wants the reply to all this? The Government is being questioned. Therefore, the adjournment motion is being insisted upon. Is the Government accountable? Does it have any reply for the increasing accidents. Has it not been unsuccessful in performing its duty? Has not it lost the ground to remain in power? The question regarding the number of casualties has been raised. This number may change by evening but I would not like to link this question with the number. Alright if our adjournment motion is rejected but the question is different. The Government fails in a particular area continuously and the Hon. Minister fails to perform his duty properly, then should this House keep mum and does this Government have not any Constitutional responsibility or accountability? Should the people die in this way. What a big tragedy has taken place!

Now I would like to come to my last point. I will not take much time since I want that the Hon. Members should express their views on it. Mr. Speaker, Sir, why this dispute arises at the time of every railway accident that the Government is mentioning the casualties to be less whereas the number is high. Do not we know how to count the dead bodies? Are we not able to keep the record of the dead bodies even? We are not worried about the living people, we have converted them into dead ones but even the record of those who have died is also not maintained. The Government has lost its credibility so much that every time different figures are given. The record of the casualties can be maintained and the counting can be done. Their families can be informed. After all the passengers boarded the trains after buying the tickets. The railway has some responsibility towards them. Why a confusion is being created regarding the number of casualties. We talk about transparency. But can we not show transparency in this case that so many people have died. We have counted each of the victims. The family members of the deceased are being informed. We should not take the deceased as dead bodies merely. They were living human beings, who have fallen a victim of our mistake. We do not have the record of that even.

Our friends, from Firozabad and Agra will speak themselves. The relief work which should have been started immediately was not done upto when they were there. There was shortage of potable water. A number of people have died there and no proper attention was paid towards them. The injured are not given proper treatment. Details of all these things should be given by the Government. Mr. Speaker, Sir, when a big accident takes place, a commission is set up. Three big commissions have been set up till date and Judicial enquiry has been conducted. The inspector of safety conducts the enquiry in a different way. I have that the reports of all these are not published. There is a need to publish all those report. Whether each

of the recommendations has been implemented or not, it should also be taken into consideration. The faith of the people in railway travel has shaken. If that faith is to be restored then many steps will have to be taken and as I have said that Government should give example of its accountability towards the Parliament and the country.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a great tragedy about which we are discussing today in this House. One of the most serious railway accidents has taken place, where the report is that the number of casualties may be over one thousand persons dead and a large number of people injured. The Hon. Prime Minister, in his statement, has said that 230 persons have been injured so far. Many of them, as we find from the newspapers, are in a very critical condition.

It is quite fit and proper that this House which represents the country as a whole should express its condolences through the Condolence Resolution that you have been good enough to move. The question of a vital importance that immediately arises now is what action is being taken to rescue the people, who have been trapped there and for the treatment of the persons who are injured.

Apart from the great tragedy that has befallen the members of the family of those who have been killed, it is essential that all possible action should be taken to reach the minimum requirements to save the lives of the people who have been injured, who are in a critical condition and no effort should be spared in this regard. In this connection, what we have come to know is that very useful work has been done by many voluntary agencies and we should openly acknowledge the very constructive role that has been played and the efforts that have been made by them under the great seriously difficult conditions. We must appreciate it and I wish to put on record our appreciation of the role of the voluntary agencies there and I must congratulate the people that they have responded immediately. There are some complaints about difficulty in reaching the Railway's arrangements for rescuing the people and for looking after the injured.

This has become not an annual feature but almost a monthly feature, a quarterly feature in this country. This is the fourth very major accident in this country, this year. The Railways is the most important national carrier in this country apart from being the biggest public sector undertaking. It is the most important national carrier, especially in a country like ours - a vast country with a huge population, with people hardly able to afford any other mode of transport. This has to serve the largest number of people and there is the importance of the Railways. But over the years, unfortunately, the Railways is not getting that attention which it should have got and incidents like this are happening repeatedly.

This is a case of one train ramming against the other or hitting the other from behind. This is something inexcusable in a country like ours in the later part of the 20th century where we cannot control such types of accidents and just pass it on, saying that some human failure of a cabin man or a signaller or somebody; then they think as if that is the end of the matter. Then the ritual investigation by the Commissioner of Safety takes place. Thereafter everything seems to be forgotten. Who suffers? What steps are being taken to introduce the new modern systems? They are not very modern.

Sir, I shall place the Reports of the Committee of 1982 which have recommended so many things for avoiding railway accidents of the particular type that has happened now. Sir, in May this year, the Madras-Kanyakumari Express collided with a goods train near Salem and there were a very large number of casualties; and 52 people were killed. I am only referring to some of the accidents which have taken place this year. That was on 14th of May. Today we are on 21st of August. I would like to know from the Prime Minister as to what has happened after that? What is the result of the inquiry? What remedial action has been taken? Merely increasing the compensation from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000 does not help matters though it is necessary. But is the Railways learning any lessons? Can the lives of the people of this country be a matter of such total unconcern by the Railway authorities?

Repeatedly such accidents are happening. Similar accidents are taking place, I stress, 'similar accidents'. This is a similar accident which has taken place. The other one is also very serious which happened in a place called Kalubathan about three months ago. Shildajammu Tawi Express was diverted towards a loop line and then that accident took place where 45 people died. It is a similar accident. What has happened after that? Sometimes when the House is in Session, when the issue is raised, a statement is made, some sort of discussion takes place and everything goes under the limbo; and everything is put under the carpet. I must also say that whether we are seriously following these things or not is a matter to be looked into. What is to be done?

A Standing Committee has been constituted by you and I have got the great responsibility and honour to be the Chairman of that Standing Committee. All our reports were unanimous, but how many have been implemented? We were to take up, I can tell you Sir, the rolling stock problem and all that which are also responsible for this. On so many important subject, we have submitted unanimous reports, but how many have been taken notice of and how many have been implemented? We can only follow up, by the Action Taken Reports which the Committee does not accept, nowadays we are experiencing the attitude that 'sorry, we cannot; we would not. Almost on that basis, they will say. Then what does the Committee do? We can only reiterate our recommendations. A great institution or a great methodology that you have been kind enough to adopt, we all support it. But let it not become just a formality.

Another similar accident which was to take place was just averted because of the presence of mind of the railway employee there on the Black Diamond Express, soon after that Kalubathan accident of Jammu Tawi Express.

Then, in June, 73 people were killed in two accidents in West Bengal and Orissa. Today, some of the newspapers have given a list of major train accidents. I find about 30 or 35 major accidents which had taken place since 1981. Have the human lives any value? Shri Vajpayee has said, there is the feeling that railway journey is no longer a safe journey - deocities, troubles, anxieties. Passenger amenities are not there. The people are thrown away from the train. Punctuality has lost all sense of importance. We find that the whole approach to the Railways has taken its formal shape which shows that the Government is totally unconcerned, could-not-care-less type of attitude.

I am sorry that the Railway Minister is unwell and he had to go abroad. We wish him speedy and complete recovery. He has been here for so many years. In which areas is there any improvement? Wagons are needed but orders are not placed. Big Central Government undertakings are getting closed for want of orders. People are on the streets. Workers are on the streets. Idle wages to the extent of Rs. 70 crore are paid. We have been making umpteen representations. We have been raising it in the House. I understand that now under some sort of pressure, some orders are being given.

I am mentioning this because this accident should not be looked into in isolation. This is becoming the result of a continued neglect-not only neglect, a studied indifference-to the problems of the Railways, the demands of the Railways and demands of the people of this country which is the other mode of travel for the common people of this country. How does one come? We are talking of Indian unity. We want exchange of views, exchange of people in the sense of their visits. Otherwise, what is this Indian unity? Then, how would people come from 50,60-100 or 200 miles? Which is the other method? But we do not find any improvement in the Railways.

So far as this aspect of accidents on the same track because of two trains is concerned, I am referring to a Report of the Railway Reforms Committee as early as April, 1982 which dealt with the question of railway safety. I will read the names of the Members : Chairman was Shri B.D. Pande who subsequently resigned and was appointed Governor of West Bengal. The other distinguished Members were : Prof. Ravi J. Matthai, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad; Shri Russi Mody, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, TISCO; Justic H.C.P. Tripathi, former Judge, Allahabad High Court; Dr. Manmohan Singh, Member, Planning Commission-the other 'Manmohan Singh', not this Manmohan Singh. This new avatar has jettisoned everything! The other Member was Shri M.S. Gujral, Chairman Railway Board and Secretary was Dr. S.K. Ray.

Now I will quote the unanimous finding of this Committee from page 4 of the Report :

"The Committee consider that there are a few basic and vital issues which need urgent consideration and in this background, the Committee have applied themselves to the immediate task of concentrating attention on two major areas where immediate action is both necessary and possible.

"These are all the important issues of raising Railways resources to enable the Railways to catch up with the frightening areas in renewal and rehabilitation of the permanent way and the rolling stock, accidents and safety which have been exercising the minds of the people and the Government alike."

How much has the Finance Minister provided for these in his new dispensation? This was not the first Report; this was preceded by three Reports headed by distinguished people. One Committee was headed by very eminent person, Dr. Kunzru in 1961. The second Committee was the Wanchoo Committee of 1968 and the third one, the Sikri Committee of 1978. The fourth Committee was, I hope, with the active participation of Dr. Manmohan Singh. I do not know whether he was a sleeping member or not. Sir, we have got the great benefit of having fat reports; there is no dearth of reports. Now, what is the action taken on these Reports? The Prime Minister cannot run away today from answering this questions. He has to answer these questions today. You cannot play with the lives of the people saying that you are looking into it and the Commissioner (Safety) will look into it. Somebody says that the cabin man has already fled away. What can that poor man do? You will immediately catch hold of him and say that he is the culprit.

Sir, there is a system known as track circuiting which is not a very modern concept. This concept was of 1981. And in 1981, Kunzru Committee also recommended that. In page 528, it says :

"An analysis of train collisions covering a period of six years made by the Kunzru Committee in 1963, had revealed that 37 per cent of the collisions on broad gauge and 42 per cent on metre gauge were caused due to reception of a train on a blocked line or by despatching it into a blocked section. To avoid such train collisions, the Kunzru Committee had suggested track circuiting of passenger lines at stations"

That is what has happened here. I am again quoting from Dr. Manmohan Singh's Report. What happened in 1963, 32 years back?

"Six years later, in 1969, while reviewing the pace of track circuiting, the Wanchoo Committee found that the progress in this regard had been

slow because the Railways had not addressed themselves to this task with the necessary sense of urgency. They recommended that the Railways should step up the progress and aim at completing within the next ten years the track circuiting of run-through lines and other passenger lines at all stations on trunk routes and main lines as well as important junction-stations on branch lines.

The Wanchoo Committee had also recommended that the Railways were providing track circuiting on run-through lines at stations between fouling marks only. While this partial track circuiting, no doubt, reduced dependance on the human element for ensuring clearance of the line between fouling marks, it did not guarantee that the line was also cleared beyond the fouling marks."

Ten years after 1969 came 1979. By 1979, this should have been over. It was very inadequate. Therefore, paragraph 3.4 of 1982 Committee says :

"While the Kunzru Committee, Wanchoo Committee and Sikri Committee had envisaged provisions of track circuiting on run-through as well as passenger lines at stations, the Railway Board mainly embarked on a programme of track circuiting of run-through lines between fouling marks primarily on the trunk and main lines routes. The progress achieved in this regard is very slow."

I do not want to burden the records by reading it. I hope this report will be found out in the Archives of the Government and brought out. But I may present a copy to Dr. Manmohan Singh to remind himself of his great contribution which has been faithfully ignored and now, Dr. Manmohan Singh has dried the Railways of their sufficient funds, of course, under the leadership of the Railway Ministry and the Prime Minister.

Sir, so far as the signalling and telecommunication are concerned, the revised estimate for 1992-93 was Rs. 150 crore and the provision made for 1993-94 was Rs. 165.65 crore. It is totally inadequate in any event. Now, what happened to that? Rs. 165 crore were allocated for 1993-94 but the amount spent was less than that, is, Rs. 162.99 crore. You could not even spend Rs. 165 crore. But the provision was made for Rs. 226 crore for 1994-95.

Sir, kindly notice that. When the provision was made for Rs. 226.78 crore as a revised estimate; the amount actually spent was Rs. 177 crore. It was Rs. 50 crore less at Rs. 177.03 crore. In the 1995-96, this is the figure as has been given, I know Dr. Manmohan Singh will now say, 'As Finance Minister, I am giving money. It is for them to allocate, in which subject they will do it.' But you have something to do with the economic reforms. Have you jettisoned all your previous roles? You have given up your

roles as Secretary of the South-South Commission. You are totally disowning, what you have said earlier.

12.31hrs

[Mr. Deputy-Speaker in the Chair]

But now at least, you are a Cabinet Minister. If your colleagues in the Cabinet are not functioning, then at least please bring them to the notice, remove the cobwebs. Bring them out from the archives.

Now has this Government any responsibility? At the top is the Prime Minister of India who takes over himself all the liabilities because he cannot manage his flock. The Railway Minister, unfortunately, goes for treatment. Then he has to take over himself because if he gives to one, other will immediately say, 'what is this? Why so and so is being favoured?' This is because, everybody knows, the Railway Ministry is a very important Ministry, especially during the Election Year Budget, especially.

This is the way, this Government is functioning. The Minister of State for Defence who is, as it is, unable to manage the Defence, is being sent there. In what capacity? Is he temporary Railway Minister? What is his *locus standi*? Just he was the Prime Minister's emissary. Then why was only he sent, because at one time he had mismanaged the Railways? This is the amazing way of functioning in this country. The innocent peoples have lost their lives whose only crime was that they were travelling.

Sir, we have read that some people were coming for appearing in the interviews. This is so tragic that the young athletes, the junior athletes who had gone for training and were coming back after their training with so much hopes and dreams to do something for the country have died or suffered serious injuries. Some Armymen who were travelling in the trains have also died. Their only fault was that they were the passengers of the Indian Railways.

It is very easy to say 'a signal man's responsibility.' Then why was this track circuiting not done when it is being recommended since 1963? I would like to know whether any attempt or exercise was done as to how much money would be needed. It is from 1963 onwards and not now.

As I said, we now are talking about the 21st century; we are talking of so many technological developments. We are trying to introduce them in this country. The telecom policy has been announced. The whole telecom sector has been opened up.

I take it that these are all simple gadgets. They were available even in 1963. Important Committees one after the other—the Kunzru Committee, headed by Dr. Hridaynath Kunzru, Justice Wanchoo Committee, Justice Sikri Committee—have reported about this. Even the report of the latest Committee which was set up in 1982 had recommended about it. Now, has any attempt ever been

made? Similar accidents have taken place. When similar accidents have taken place—a stationary train is being hit by another train—the question is : Why is it standing there? No action is being taken. There is no method to find out whether some got stuck up somewhere. There should immediately be a procedure to stop other trains from coming there.

Sir, what will happen? Could this Government wash away all these failures through insensitive approaches? If I may say so, the totally callous attitude of the Government towards the Railways is nothing but an anti-national attitude.

Railways is the biggest public sector undertaking; the only method of transport by the common people of this country. It is left in the mercy of—I do not know-whom? Maybe God. If an accident takes place, they would say it is either act of God or an inevitable accident or what is called an act of the cabin-man. Has anyone above the signalman or the cabinman suffered in any of the earlier accidents?

SHRI INDERJIT GUPTA (Midnapore) : One Minister resigned many years ago.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Yes. We know that one Minister resigned many years ago. That was appreciated all over the country. But those are rare virtues. The present Congress would not believe in such things. This is the, I do not know, husk of a Congress, a Congress with the smallest 'c'. This is the present position. We know that they are going to their inevitable end. But you cannot play with the lives of the people. You cannot continue to take the country for a ride just because you are unable to perform. You are looking more under the table than over the table. This is happening so far as developmental activities are concerned. Everywhere—you cannot admit openly but everywhere it is happening. Therefore, who bothers? Probably, this track circuiting is not a very costly device.

Sir, what is the answer? We would like to know specifically as to what steps have been taken with regard to this track circuiting. It is not today's innovation. It has been a very old system; fairly 35 years old system at least. Very very responsible Committees have been recommending about it in their report, after report year after year. I do not know with a reduced budgetary provision and with an even reduced actual expenditure on that how it would be possible. The country demands an explanation from the Prime Minister as to whether there exists any mechanism to regularly study these reports and implement these reports.

Sir, I am sure, this House would have very liberally conceded to higher and higher grants. As a matter of fact, every time—as you know—the Railway Budget is placed, how the Hon. members of Parliament get exercised—legitimately—you cannot blame them—because instead of giving higher railway facilities, they are being reduced.

What is the condition of passengers? The first step that was taken up by the Standing Committee on Railways, at the unanimous desire of the members, was the question of Passengers' amenities which is being reduced now. Does anybody take care to know what is happening? Of course, ministers do not travel by rail. Nobody bothers about the condition of the trains. There is no drinking water facility. The report will come that in so many stations so many workers have been put on job and at the end the Action Taken Report will be there. There are so many such items.⁸

We find that in the name of going to the Twenty-first Century, this country has taken up only gauge conversion. There are unanimous reports about that. Of course, everybody wants gauge conversion. Everybody wants a unigauge system but not at the expense of other important works like, doubling, new lines, track renewals, passengers' amenities, electrification and so many other important things. Monies are being deducted from these heads. Last year about Rs. 300 crore were deducted from other heads and diverted to gauge conversion. You can see periodically one full page advertisement appearing in the Papers showing our Prime Minister on the one side and the Minister of Railways on the other saying, "We are making great progress. Here is a double line". We have been asking the economic result of the double line on a particular route but till now no report has come. The Government say, it is too early to make a study. When we ask for doubling or new line, they say that they cannot do it because the money is needed for gauge conversion. This is the lopsided nature of the Government.

It has been found out, because it is a part of the Parliament's property, that at the desire of the Minister the whole system of procurement and acquisition of wagons was changed. The Minister of Railways says, "My hunch is that this procedure should be followed". And the Planning Commission has laid down a procedure ignoring that. The Cabinet has laid down a procedure as to how wagons are to be procured. The Cabinet's decision was ignored. The minister says, "In my hunch I think we should change the system. It would be better." This is the attitude of the Government of India or the Ministry of Railways. Nobody seem to bother about it. It is the periodical shedding of tears by the Government of India or by the Minister of Railways. It is worse than the crocodile tears.

Lives of the people of this country are no longer safe. We find that the periodicity of these accidents has assumed a menacing proportion. Hardly we should call it an accident. Nowadays if a train passes smoothly then it is an accident. It is becoming unusual if you come by train without facing any trouble. Of course, the trouble of lack of drinking water facility, food and other amenities will always be there. There will be no toilet facility because nowadays in toilets you find pillows and bed sheets. I am talking about the Rajdhani Express. That is the priority. Mr. Finance Minister, I do not know how much you know about it! Sometimes I really feel, should we exonerate you of all this or are you a willing party to all this?

SHRI AMAL DATTA (Diamond Harbour) : If he knew about it, he would have resigned by now.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : He should know it better.

Therefore, Sir, I am sorry, I cannot but demand that this is an occasion where the least that can be done is the Minister of Railways should resign. But he is here. I cannot ask his resignation for this accident. He should resign *ex post facto*.

Enough has been done. Why could the present Railway Minister - not poor Mallikarjun - not provide proper post-accident arrangements for treatment etc. Therefore, the least the Prime Minister can do is to go gracefully.

[Translation]

It is enough, you have ruined the country here you get lost. Enough is enough. He has assumed the responsibility of the Railways and within a few days contributed the biggest railway accident of this decade. Therefore, let him go gracefully. There is no alternative to this.

[Translation]

SHRI SHARAD YADAV : Censure motion should be moved on this issue.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : What you would censure, they have become accustomed to all this.

[English]

Therefore, I demand that this Government should go. The Prime Minister should resign. He must accept the responsibility for this.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH (Satna) : The electricity has gone. If you make such demands, this is what will happen!

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : For a time there will be temporary darkness. Then the real light will come and the people of this country will assert themselves and they will choose a proper Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is really a day of national mourning. Once again, I beg to convey our sincere feelings of sorrow and our feelings of condolence to the members of the families of the unfortunate deceased passengers of this train. We wish the injured a complete and speedy recovery. I once more congratulate those non-Governmental organisations and the common people who came to help them. I demand that this Government should provide adequate compensation and not this pittance of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000. All steps should be taken to look after the injured people for their recovery. It should be done on war footing. Sir, I reiterate that the least that this Government can do is to spare the country of them. I do not know who will reply....

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA (CUTTAK) : The Prime Minister should reply.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : He should, unless he resigns before that!

This Government must tell the people how these accidents could happen one after another in spite of repeated recommendations by important Committees. It is really not a case of an accident because a stationary train is hit. This has happened elsewhere in the country also.

Therefore, this Railway Ministry and the Railway Minister, whoever is there, must accept the fullest responsibility. It is the Government's failure. It is the result of a calculated move of denigrating the public sector, denuding the public sector of its importance. The nibbling has started. Sometimes the Government is nibbling, and also sometimes gulping various areas of the railway activity. It is this attitude that has resulted in this, the attitude of total negligence. I demand that the Government must fully answer to these points. Sir, let this debate be treated as a debate where we censure this Government for its total inefficiency, for its total negligence and, if I may say so, for the criminal negligence on the part of the Government. The least they can do is, to go gracefully now.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this rail accident deserves severest of the condemnation and present Government should be held responsible for it. It is really unfortunate for the country that travelling by any means of transport is not safe. Yesterday, I along with several Members of Southern India was coming from Madras. Suddenly the plane developed some fault and it has to make emergency landing at Nagpur. Fortunately, at that time there was no other plane, otherwise Holy Ghost alone knows as to what might have happened of it.

In case of trains I would like to say that Railway Ministry has been accorded a special status among all the ministries of the Government of India. It has a separate kingdom. An exclusive budget for Railway is presented and passed in this House separately, whereas budgets of other Ministries are taken up with the general budget. As compared to other ministries, the responsibilities of Railways are different. I apprehended big accident since when the Hon. Prime Minister took over the charge of Railways. When I read in newspapers that Hon. Prime Minister has taken over the charge of Railways I became apprehensive of some mishap and it took place yesterday only. How Railways can be safe, when this country itself is not safe in the hands of Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, yesterday's accident is really unfortunate. We are taking it seriously. I wish that the Government should be censured and Adjournment Motion be brought in this House but treasury benches are vacant. I desire that the Government should be condemned by

bringing a censure Motion or let this issue be debated either under Adjournment Motion or under Rule 184 so that at the end of the debate division of votes could be done to fix the responsibility of the Government. The main thing is that Hon. Prime Minister would have visited the place of accident as Ferozabad is not very far. Hon. Member has visited the place of accident and he is crying in the House. Administration would have taken it seriously and people would have felt that grimness of the situation if Hon. Prime Minister had visited the accident spot. But Hon. Prime Minister remained in Delhi even after such a ghastly accident took place. He sent a Minister of State to the place of accident, who is not in-charge of that Ministry and who at the moment conspicuous by his absence. We are raising this issue and condemning it but who is going to convey it to him. He has many other responsibilities as well. I would like to say that there is none here to take accidents of such magnanimity seriously.

In 1981, another such incident took place. 15 years ago a train had derailed and fallen in Bagmati river near Kursela. Later on the findings of the inquiry revealed that this accident took place due to increase in the speed of the train, as the track was not strong and started tilting due to increased speed and the train fell into the river. According to the Governmental report 270 persons were killed in that accident but people did not get the compensation even after 10 years. Reports of several accidents are presented but not discussed here at all. No action is taken thereon. Today discussion Ferozabad accident is going on in this House. Prime Minister would come here to say a few words but none is here to take care of their bereaved families. Therefore, I would like to say that Prime Minister himself should have visited the spot and this matter should be taken up seriously.

Just now, the Chairman of Standing Committee on Railways was speaking here. I admit that there are certain points, such as trains do not arrive and depart, in time. People have to sit on a long time waiting at railway stations. Sometimes we are told that train is coming in time and yet after two hours, it is said that train is on right time. Sometimes passengers are told that it is just reaching.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, once in March I was going to Lucknow from Patna and no train was available so I thought of going to Lucknow via Kanpur which is near to that place. But in Kanpur I found that the train scheduled to reach the station at 5 A.M. came instead at 8 P.M. In the same way there is no arrangement for drinking water in railway. At the time of passing the railway budget, all these items are included and later on no satisfactory reason is stated for such shortcomings.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in the context of accidents, I would like to say that 16 major railway accidents have taken place during the last four years and this is the most ghastly accident among them. Several soldiers, players and common citizen of the country have lost their lives and Railway Board is still maintaining silence over it. According to them one train was stopped because a

buffalo was cut on the track and the second train coming from opposite direction was given wrong signal and thus it rammmed into the other train. What would be more unfortunate than this?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, on corruption I would like to say that in railways it has crossed all the limits. Corruption is rampant in the name of modernisation. No one is thereto supervise and inquire into these matters. None is punished after inquiry is hold. No one is made responsible for big accidents. A fourth class employee would be dismissed when report of such a big accident would be presented here after 2 or 3 years and thus the matter ends.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I could not understand as to why no action is taken in the aftermath of such accidents even after raising the issue in this House time and again I would like to remind that when Late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Railway Minister, he resigned from the Ministership over a train accident. In the same way responsibility of accidents should be fixed. Officers at lower level would also get scared if it is done. But here responsibility is not fixed and that is why big officers escape and same small or fourth class employee is made responsible and dismissed from service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in respect of compensation I would like to say something about the ex-gratia amount released by Hon. Prime Minister. Compensation for life is given in accordance with the economic standard of the passengers. Rate of compensation is different for different persons killed in plane accident, train accident, bus accident and rickshaw accident. I would like to say that this discrimination should be stopped and equal compensation which may be two lakh or five lakh should be paid for people killed in any accident. Alongwith it I demand that one member of each family should be given Government service within one month. It is not necessary that it would be given only in Railways but in any Governmental department within one month.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the inquiry, I would like to say that all the departments of railway, be it the safety department or any other department; these are inter related. Therefore, I demand that a special Court should be constituted and judicial inquiry be conducted to enquire into this matter which would make its report within one month. This report should be laid on the Table and arrangements should be made to punish to guilty officials.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether it is railways or any other department, such incidents would not stop until and unless you make the employees accountable. Just now Shri Somnath told that it was a system failure and corruption on large scale has become cancer for the system. The water of Ganges cannot be cleaned until the Gangotri is polluted.

13.00 hrs.

Today none of the departments is corruption free. The concept of quality has lost its relevance. I, therefore, demand that a compensation of Rs. 5 lakh should be paid to bereaved families of each killed and arrangements for providing Government service to one member of each family be made. Judicial inquiry should be conducted into it and a time-bound special court should be constituted to inquire into it. Alongwith it this House condemns that the Hon. Prime Minister, being the in-charge of Railway Ministry, has no time to visit the spot of accident. Nothing could be more shameful than this. He has brought this country on the verge of annihilation and now life of people is not safe in railway since when he has taken up the charge of Railway Ministry. Now Hon. Prime Minister has no right to remain on this post. I seek his resignation as Railway Minister so that election could be conducted in the country. The next Government would manage the country some how but at least the country should get rid of him.

With these words, I conclude and thank you for allowing me to speak.

[English]

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA (Balasore) : Sir, from my constituency, some people have died and some people have got serious injuries.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Next you will have a chance. Your name is there.

[Translation]

SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA (Firozabad) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the train accident at Firozabad is the biggest of all in the country. It is the most heart-rending and an unprecedented accident. I am an eyewitness to it. When I was passing through that area at 1.40, I saw the tragic accident. There was not a single person who did not shed tears on seeing the accident. All the honourable members have presented their facts. This fatal accident took place in my constituency. I will not go into the facts. I was going to make this demand when the Hon. Prime Minister was sitting here and when Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee said that I should be heard. Everything is in a disarray in the hospital. There were 130 dead bodies in the hospital. And in the railway colony 270 dead bodies were dumped in a single room. There was no arrangement for ice nor electricity nor generator.

Shri Mallikarjun was deputed there by the Hon. Prime Minister. He returned after giving only empty assurances. I would request that the Hon. Prime Minister should immediately make some arrangements there. Some arrangements should immediately be made for the victims, whether they belonged to Tatanagar, Orissa, Puri or Calcutta. Secondly, the District Magistrate and the administration failed miserably in their duties. Entire Firozabad has observed bandh. The Administration had

become paralysed. The activists of the Non-Governmental Organisations were extricating the dead bodies but the administration remained a mute spectator. The irregularities committed by the District Magistrate deserve severest condemnation. Similar was the role of S.S.P. The police personnel were seen busy in searching and taking out valuables from the pockets of the deceased. The District Magistrate and the S.S.P. should be transferred immediately. Only then some kind of order will be established. Dead bodies were being thrown like logs. Now, I am not in a position to continue my speech. This accident took place in my constituency. I am hopeless. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I request you that some arrangement should be made there immediately to establish some kind of order. The District Magistrate and the S.S.P. should be immediately removed.

Our leaders are right in their views that there is a legal procedure involved in it. Parliament is the highest institution in India. It functions on facts. I thank (them) profusely for keeping the morning time schedule in mind. The Prime Minister spoke of giving Rs. 5000 or Rs. 10,000 as compensation. 177 dead bodies dumped in the railway colony are not being registered. Arrangements should be made to prevent the administration from disposing of unregistered dead bodies.

The families of the deceased should be given adequate compensation. A judicial inquiry should be ordered into this train accident. The guilty railway officials should be given stringent punishment. The Railway Minister has gone abroad. Had the Hon. Prime Minister received any invitation from abroad, he too would have gone immediately.

Such big accidents are taking place in the country. Firozabad has been observing a bandh for the last two days. Each family is crying there. Parents of two children are missing. Among the survivors, a female child is one-and-a-half year old. Another child is two and-a-half year old. Still another female child is 9 year old. Their parents are missing. Such children are tossing about in agony. No arrangement has been made to take care of them. The Prime Minister should resign owning moral responsibility for an accident of such a magnitude. While coming to Lok Sabha, I had made up my mind to resign, if he failed to do so. The Government may be devoid of shame, but I am not. My views were not heard. I felt very sad. Today I am not in a position to speak. I only want to say that maximum compensation should be paid to bereaved families. Further, a judicial inquiry should be ordered into this accident.

With these words, I thank you.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH : Hon. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, listening to my dear friend who represents the constituency where this heart-rending accident took place, one sometimes hesitates to describe in language which is matching the feelings of the people who have been injured and of the next of kin of the people who have been killed.

We have expressed condolences, we have expressed our sympathy; that is as it should have been. But everything else is said here on the floor of this House, whether it is the question of accountability, transparency or implementation of the recommendations or ensuring safety in a transport system which at one time prided itself to be not only the largest in the world, but also the most efficient in the world, in spite of many constraints that we have.

I think that saying all this is absolutely useless on the floor of this House, because transparency, accountability and probity, in my humble opinion, are dirty words in the dictionary of this Government. I do not know why and to attend to what the Hon. Railway Minister is absent when this debate is going on in this House.

[Translation]

AN HON. MEMBER : The Minister has gone to London.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : The Hon. Prime Minister is looking after the Railway Portfolio. He has taken over the charge from him. You say something to the Prime Minister. He is present here.

[English]

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Midnapore) : Now the Prime Minister is in charge of the Railways.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH : Sir, I know that our leader of the C.P.I.(M), Shri Somnathji, in a lighter vein has mentioned the name of Shri Jaffer Sharief. I would not be surprised, Sir, if in the convoluted logic that governs the actions of the Prime Minister, Mr. Jaffer Sharief himself be asked to resign for this accident.

Now, why should this thing happen? The casualness with which they utter lack of sensitivity to public lies at the root of all that has happened and with all due respect and regards to all of us sitting here as Member of Parliament—which is the Tenth Lok Sabha of our Republic—let me say in humility and with an apology beforehand that what this Parliament has permitted to happen or perhaps has acquiesced in time to come. I do not know what the future generations of this country will have to say about this. Why is there no accountability? I do not want to go into all the details which the Hon. Member Shri Somnathji has given. He has all that at his fingertips. But the Government runs on its credibility. You cannot help everything; you cannot mend everything; you cannot put everything right. Everyone knows that. But at least the feeling is that you are aware of what is going wrong. The belief is that you will attend to what is going wrong and you will put things right. But when that belief and faith vanishes, Hon. Deputy-Speaker, great democracies have come to grief. That is the history of this World. I see that happening gradually in this country also.

We are importing equipment worth crores and crores

of rupees. We get engines that run at the speed of 250 kilometres per hour or so by spending Rs. 700 crore or even more. All this justification was given in this House in spite of the objections raised. You just imagine that if one of those engines had been at the head of the train that collided what would have been the scene in that unfortunate place. But has anybody turned round and asked : 'What has happened? Why has it happened?' Yes, we have coined a new word now in India, it is a systemic failure. What is the system? This system is not made of clay, of mannequin or of puppets. This is a democratic system which we have devised for ourselves in the full knowledge of our responsibility. It is the system which we have promised to deliver goods to India, its citizens, the poor and the needy what they lack. And if this does not happen, if that responsibility is not discharged, we cannot blame the system. It is we who run the system that are to be blamed. But are we prepared to do that?

I am sure when the Hon. Prime Minister, who is the Railway Minister today, decides to come back to this House—which, in my opinion, he treats with utter disdain bordering on contempt—we will know what he has to say. But that is not what is at issue here. All that has gone wrong when this accident took place has to be clearly identified, not as an isolated incident but as Shri Somnathji has said, how by systemic disregard of everything that should have been looked into, attended to not having been done resulting in this grave and serious accident. Unless the Prime Minister is able to tell this House and the country about this in precise details, all that he says here today, in my view, would be nothing, not the worth of the words that he will utter.

I want to say, Sir, that the time has come when this Parliament must assert itself, when we, who have been returned to this Parliament as the representatives of the people, should listen to what the people of this country are saying today, whether we sit on this side of the House or on that side of the House. If we do not do that, the danger is not to the individuals, the danger will be to the democratic system of the country, which will be very sad in the history of this country.

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA (Balasore) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am seriously overwhelmed with grief at the worst train disaster ever occurred in our country. In a train accident which took place in July, 1988, 107 people died, but the death toll is the highest in this accident which took place yesterday. In this accident more than 300 people died and more than 400 are seriously injured.

Sir, I am very much grateful to our Hon. Prime Minister that he has taken steps to send relief to the affected people. I congratulate him that he has come with a statement to this House and I also congratulate our Hon. Leader of Opposition, Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji, because he has demanded that the discussion should start immediately after the statement of the Hon. Prime Minister in this House. ... (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY (Allahabad) : Such a big accident has occurred and you are congratulating?

[English]

Dr. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : Sir, I am really shocked due to this accident. Here, some Hon. Members were putting pressure in this House that the discussion should take place in the shape of an Adjournment Motion.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Mr. Patra, you address the Chair.

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : But, I congratulate our Hon. Leader of the Opposition because he has pressed the demand that the discussion should be taken up immediately after the statement of the Hon. Prime Minister. (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : When you have a chance to speak you can rebut it.

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : Sir, I also congratulate our Hon. Speaker that he has given the ruling for starting this discussion immediately....(Interruptions) Many people were coming to Delhi from my constituency by this train.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY : He should take back his congratulation. The train accident occurred due to his negligence and he is congratulating. What is he congratulating for?

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Saroj Dubeyji, when you have a chance to speak you can rebut it. He has got a right to speak. You cannot take away his right. Let us hear him now. You will have a chance to speak.

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : Sir, many people from my constituency were coming by this train. Some of those people are seriously injured and there is no information in respect of some other people. I do not know whether they have died or they are safe somewhere. I have tried my level best to find out as to what happened to them.

Sir, I have heard the statement made by our Hon. Prime Minister. He has stated that he has sent some officers and some of his Cabinet colleagues to the accident site. Some Hon. Members are very much agitated here. I am also equally agitated in my mind about this accident.

Sir, it is discussed in this House that the policy of this Government is highly irresponsible.

The accountability of the Government is discussed here. First of all, I would say that this is not the situation to discuss the accountability or the policy of the Government. The policy of the Government has been discussed threadbare in discussion on the Railway

Budget. We should discuss what steps should be taken and what steps have been taken by the Government so far to give relief to the victims. One thing I want to say is that those Members who were in the Government earlier are also criticising the Government severely. I am ashamed of this because the policy and the action taken by the Government are very clear.

Sir, some Members are telling that due to the anti-national attitude of the Government these sorts of accidents occur. This is not the fact.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Dr. Patra, you need not reply to all the Members who have spoken. The Government is there and the Hon. Minister is there. He will reply to all these points. Your duty is to make valuable suggestions, if there are any, for giving relief to the victims.

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : Sir, my first and foremost appeal to the Government is that it should identify and declare the bogies which have totally been destroyed or damaged and also declare that these are the persons who were travelling in these bogies against reserved tickets. The Government should also identify the persons who have died and declare the same through media, Doordarshan and Radio so that the kith and kin of the victims could know about their relatives.

Sir, secondly, arrangements for travelling of the passengers who are stranded there should be made immediately. Information centres should be opened immediately at New Delhi and halting stations of Purushottam Express as well as Kalindi Express so that the kith and kin of the victims could make enquiries... (Interruptions) I will not yield. The entire country and the people from far and near are waiting to know what has happened to their family members. They are in dark. I am a Member of Parliament, even I am in dark. My Mrs. and others were coming and they have reached safely. But seven others who were travelling by this train in bogie nos. S1, S2, S3, and S4, have not reached so far. Though I have tried my level best, I have not received any information about them.

Sir, it has been pointed out here that because of the policy of the Government this sort of accidents occur.

Earlier, the Member have told that certain accidents took place on May 3.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Dr. Patra, you have made very valuable and constructive suggestions to the Government. I think that is sufficient. Now, we will give a chance to some others.

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : I will put some suggestions here. I have gone through the Report and earlier, I have also participated in submitting the Reports to the House. When an inquiry was ordered about the fire accident in a train, I have gone to that place and I have also submitted a Report. My humble submission is that some sort of training should be given to the Railway personnel.

Sir, it has been categorically mentioned that failure of human element is the largest single factor responsible for the accident. This has necessarily to be shown—even those cases of failure of equipment which is ultimately traceable to human failure—as failure of the Railway staff. In India, the dependence on human elements is even more pronounced in the absence of sophisticated counter-checking devices like automatic train control. In India, automatic train stoppage...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Dr. Patra, kindly hear me. There are other Hon. Members who want to speak. How much time will you take?

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : One sophisticated train stoppage control should be there. That device should be introduced in our Indian Railways so that in any place, at any time, if a train is to be stopped, it could be controlled with this device. This device should be introduced in our Indian Railways. Whatever money is to be paid by the Indian Railways, it should be given to them. This is my first and foremost appeal to the Government and to the Indian Railways.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Dr. Patra, you have made very valuable suggestions. Please conclude now.

DR. KARTIKESWAR PATRA : I will take just one second. People who are handling the network of controlling the running of the trains should be properly educated and trained. This would be my second suggestion to the Indian Railways.

[Translation]

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR (Ballia) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the Hon. Member from Firozabad. It is an occasion of State mourning. The agony and the words with which he has described this accident are heart-rending. My submission to the Government is that immediate steps should be taken to implement his words. I am aware of the difficulties involved in it but even then the Central Government has enough means to preserve the dead bodies of the deceased and to give a proper treatment to the injured. If it is not done in 24-36 hours, then it will be a matter of great sorrow. My suggestion is that whosoever—either the Hon. Prime Minister or any other Minister comes to the House to make a statement, he should announce steps to implement the words of the Hon. Member, who has spoken before me.

Sir, secondly, Hon. Somnath Chatterjee ji has said something. It is true that, we lack means today, but these are not so scarce that we can not use modern means. The Hon. Member quoted from the reports of 3-4 committees. I think that the Hon. Finance Minister was listening to him. He was the member of the committee which submitted its report. My submission is that a big investment is not required to acquire the means to avert such accidents. Today, the Government should, at least declare in the House that these means will be provided

to the Railways and if it is not in a position to do so, it should say so. If need be, a committee or sub-committee of Railways should be set up, even if it takes 3-6 months to see if the suggestions are being implemented or not. These two things are urgent at present. It is alright to enquire into as to who was responsible for it. I think that a committee of 2-3 persons including Shri Somnathji, who has been the member of that committee, should be set up. We should at least reach a consensus to take some steps on a certain issue. It will be denigration of Parliament of 300-500 people die in an accident and we just go on the debating the issue and conclude it with the statement by the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would not like to say anything more. We have expressed our condolences but the Government should take a decision and come out with some effective steps. The Government should at least reply to the questions of the Hon. Member from Firozabad. If Uttar Pradesh Government is not doing anything—Atal ji is not present here at the moment—I would like to urge upon Jaswant Singh ji that he should ask the State Government to do something there. If the Uttar Pradesh Government does not do anything then the Central Government should do something at its own. I would like to request the Hon. Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh to punish the guilty officer, if any. The Hon. Member was not speaking for any political gain but he was speaking from the core of his heart and taking inspiration from him, I rose to speak few words.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : There are also other Hon. Members to participate in this debate. Are we to forego the lunch or are we to break for lunch?

MANY HON. MEMBERS : Let us continue the discussion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I would like to know whether we have the break for lunch or forego the lunch and continue the discussion.

MANY HON. MEMBERS : Let us forego the lunch and continue the discussion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : All right.

[Translation]

SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT : Hon. Sir, I am one of those unfortunate people who reached the accident site first of all. It rocked the entire Agra Commissionery. Except for one Newspaper, the print media did not cover this accident. The human toll was estimated at 1000, whereas some others said that hundreds of persons had died in that accident. In that state of panic I was the first to reach the spot to ascertain as to what had actually happened.

Though I was expecting a visit by any representative of the Union Government or the Prime Minister who has very recently taken over the charge of Railways to the spot, but all in vain. Of course, Mr. Mallikarjunan-visited the site but that too very late.

I would like to make the position clear in this regard and tell you that the Chief Minister of U.P. is innocent. He reached the spot by helicopter and also visited the hospital at Firozabad. This was witnessed by the people. He promptly handed over his helicopter to the Administration for transporting the injured passengers. Therefore, I do not have any complaint against the Chief Minister. (Interruptions) The Hon. Member was speaking of D.M. and S.S.P. whereas I am talking of the Chief Minister and not about the entire administrative machinery. Please do not misunderstand me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the question of officers of U.P. Government is concerned, I do not know about the SSP and DM of Agra circle, as I could not contact them but speaking in a nutshell-all the officers of circle level were too much busy over there. Even the officers of C.O. level were detained for duty there. Officers of the rank of DSP were put on duty. But all that I want to convey is that accident was of such a magnitude that even the Administrative machinery appeared quite inadequate to cater to the needs of the hour. The number of the injured and the dead was so large that the limited facilities and arrangements available at the Firozabad hospital were totally inadequate for treating the injured. Proper facilities were not available even in the Agra hospital.

I am critical of the administrative machinery of the department of Railways because the Railway administration had no arrangements for meeting such a situation or mishap and it was doing nothing whereas the outsiders were extending their fullest help. I say it with anguish that the voluntary organisations in Firozabad were motivating people to come to Saraswati Shishumandal for donating blood. The donors had assembled in long queues but there was no doctor from the Railways present there who could take their blood and give that to the injured and save their lives. Thousands of people had thronged the spot. The place of accident is called as Suhag-Nagari. The wailing people of Suhag-Nagari were ululating upon the death of the Suhag (husbands) of their sisters in Suhagnagari. The 'Suhag' of those who died in the train accident was snatched from them but those of the injured could and would have been saved. However, the officers of the Ministry of Railways did not act promptly and dynamically. Just now, the leader of the opposition while giving the example of their promptness said that they were repairing for one and a half hours the engine of the train under which a Blue bull (Neel gai) was run over. For that period of one and a half hours the officers of the Railways could neither see the Hiranbau station nor Firozabad station whereas the latter could be seen with a naked-eye as the railway loop line touching Firozabad is not even a furlong away from the accident spot but the

Railway officers were so ignorant that they could not see the stationary train there for one and a half hours. This speaks volumes about their callousness. They say that it was the result of a manual mistake by the signal man.

13.37 hrs.

[Shri Nitish Kumar in the Chair]

I do not hold the signal man at fault. I am not talking even about the system which has been talked about. I consider it as an administrative failure. This is the responsibility of the administrative authorities of our Rail Department who have to see whether the train has reached its destination or not. Who will take care of it? But none of them has time to see it. So, even the staff at Hiranbau did not realize as to why the train has not reached even one and half hours late, nor the staff at Ferozabad took pains to see whether the train that they had plied, reached its destination or not. Therefore, I want to say that it is an administrative failure and as far as the question of administrative failure is concerned, we are making deals for engine of A.B.G. We are making deals with a view to how to ply such train as could run at the speed of 250 kilometres per hour. But when the charges of corruption and nepotism are made, then we shamelessly defend them in Lok Sabha. I had talked to the Rail employees as to why not we supply such equipment to drivers and guards whereby drivers and guards could send informations about failure of the train in the event of its getting stranded on way, with the message that accident had taken place and therefore they should be reached. Had this small thing been looked into, then this accident could have been averted. We are talking big of automation. The schemes of gauge conversion involving cost of thousand crores of rupees are being formulated but guards and drivers are not being given this facility. Had this been provided to them then this could have been averted. Now I have heard that the Rail Ministry is formulating a scheme to retrench guards and when guards are retrenched then that House will have to utilise one third of its entire session for mourning such accidents only. So this is the attitude of the Government. So I would say that the Rail Ministry has failed in ensuring safe operation of rails. The standards of Rail operation are going down day by day.

I will like to speak next thing that the incidents of train running late have increased over the last six months. There is no certainty as to how many hours later the train will arrive or whether it will arrive at all or not or what destination it would reach. I can give you an example. Marudhar Express, a newly launched train, runs late not by hours but by days. Several trains run hours behind schedule. Avadh Express also runs behind schedule. Various Delhi bound trains run very late.

Therefore, it is necessary to review the functioning of rail system and it is expedient to make it safe. We will have to make a good arrangement because we cannot manage without it. The way rail officers have shown dereliction of duty in carrying out relief work, should be

investigated and those held responsible after investigation should be dealt stringently.

I want to link the hospital issue to that of Katheria ji. Hon. Chandra Shekhar ji has also given indication to this effect. Corpses are still lying there but nobody is there to take care of them. It is summer season. Yesterday, it was raining and corpses have got saturated. Now these bodies will emit foul smell. Their post mortem is very necessary. Kith and kins of deceased will like to have a last look of these corpses before and after the post mortem. The corpses have to be handed over to their relatives but Railway has not made any proper arrangement for it so far. People are arriving there by hiring private taxies. No body is there to hear their grievances. Nobody is there to take care of the corpses. Proper arrangement should be made to this effect. This is necessary from humanitarian part of view as well. Medicines should be made available at the Governmental level for the injured and those who have fallen sick. But no arrangement has been made to this effect so far. I have gone through in a newspaper that medicines worth Rs. 10 lakhs have been sent there but not even medicines worth Rs. 10 thousands have been sent there. I am saying so on the basis of my personal knowledge and after I have visited Firozabad. If Hon. Rail Minister, Rail Ministry or its any officer wants to challenge my claim then, they could accompany me and I could show to them as to how patients have been ignored there. I want to congratulate those voluntary organisations and the doctors who have announced that patients brought to their nursing Homes would be provided free treatment. Those who are regular luggage lifters in trains have also announced that they would not resort to theft any more and if any body has to be carried to Agra, Delhi or District Head Quarter, they are ready to provide them the whole hearted services.

The people of Agra Division extended full help. But I feel distressed that the Railway Ministry remained indifferent.

There is no one to look after the orphans. The Non-Governmental Organisations can not look after them indefinitely. Therefore, I demand that the orphans should be adopted by the Government. The Government should make arrangements for their upbringing, for their employment and it must make arrangements for their education.

One more thing I would like to mention is that large number of people are reaching the site of incident to express their sympathy. There is a large crowd. It is essential to control them. They are full of sympathy and are in tears. It is their desire to extend their help. But unless there is guidance, the crowd would continue to swell. Water is not available there. At the incident site there is a nullah. The stench forces the people to cover their noses with handkerchief. Arrangement for water and accommodation for the people should be made at Firozabad so that cholera or other contagious disease do not break out there. Anxious people come from outside

but there is no one to give them information. The Hon. Prime Minister has incomplete information. Normally, I do not get agitated in the House. Because my leaders have trained me not to get agitated, no matter what the situation may be. I am pained at the Prime Minister's statement.

His statement to the nation and in the House is utterly false. I have said this twice. The Uttar Pradesh official who is looking after the disposal of the dead bodies, told me that 250 dead bodies have been sent from here. I spoke to him at quarter to two. About 50-60 dead bodies are still buried under the debris. I showed them a dead body half of which was under the bogie and the other half exposed. He too become paralysed on seeing it. Then I ordered to extricate the torso with the help of a crane. It was done before me. There children of 4-5 years were extricated before me. They said the total number of dead would cross 300. In the evening, before departing I asked them again and they said the number had risen to 300. They had either shifted or were in the act of shifting 300 dead bodies and the Press too had mentioned this figure.

I talked to the Press, at Agra. They said they had the official press note, which also mentioned the figure of 300. But the Prime Minister of this nation is so ill-informed, that he does not know whether 250 or 300 people had died. The total number of dead bodies should be more by now. Fifty soldiers have been killed. Sportsmen also were among those killed. Both the trains were jam packed. Almost all the passengers who were travelling in nine bogies that over turned, died. Large number of passengers were also injured due to derailment. Their numbers should also be determined.

The total number of those killed should also be determined. The number of passengers, travelling in the reserved compartments can be determined. The unreserved bogies were jam packed. Their numbers should also be ascertained. More dead bodies are likely to be recovered. Their inefficiency is evident from the fact that the tracks have not been cleared even 24 hours after the accident. Had the bogies been removed, the number of those injured could have been ascertained. But all this was not done. Corruption, and red tapism are responsible for this train accident. Not only this, but the series of accidents, is due to red tapism and railway officers' lack of devotion to duty. The railway officials and its staff think only of scams. I demand that the Prime Minister should resign on moral grounds. I expected the Prime Minister to visit to accident site, as done by Mayawati. Only day before yesterday he took charge of the Railway Ministry. But he did not go there. I would like to ask the Prime Minister, who holds the Railway Ministry, as to how many should die, for him to pay a visit.

It shows the height of inhumanity on the part of the Hon. Prime Minister. Had the Prime Minister been here, I would have asked him. If any Officer of his Ministry is present here, he should ask the Prime Minister as to after how many deaths of innocent people he will visit the place of accident. After all, soldiers were going to their

homes to celebrate festival, athletes were coming after playing there and the others were also going to their destination. They were not at fault. It was the moral duty of the Hon. Prime Minister that he should have gone there by helicopter and atleast have an aerial survey, if he was not able to go there at all. Had he gone there, people would have felt that he has sympathy with them. I understand that no one can bring back the dead ones, be it the Prime Minister or President of India. He could not return the members of bereaved families. But he could at least have consoled their families. But this Government has not done this job also. Therefore, I would say that the Government has badly hurt feelings of the people of the country.

I would like to tell that the number of killed is very high because 9 bogies full of passengers were derailed and overturned. Each bogie has a capacity of 70-72 passengers.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have already stated this.

SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT : Sir, I would like to say two more points. Our Railway Administration showed keenness towards decentralisation. Perhaps, the Hon. Minister has forgotten the announcement made by him in the Rajya Sabha that the Government was going to do decentralisation, and they will create some zones and some Divisions so that control may be exercised over entire administrative set-up, increasing number of passengers and trains. But after his budget speech no zones and Divisions have been created till today and as Shri Somnath Chatterjee was saying that the recommendations of all the committees constituted upto now have not been implemented and are in the files eating dust. Nothing has been done for increasing the efficiency of Railway Department.

Some of the friends have demanded for judicial inquiry. I would like to submit that inquiry into the causes of this accident should be conducted by the Parliamentary Committee and after that it should suggest some long-term measures so that efficiency of Railway Administration may be enhanced and safe travelling by train may be ensured. Because when family members go to the Railway station to see of any of their dear one, they are not sure as to whether he will return alive or not. One of my friends was telling that Railway Ministry has announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs. 10 thousand to the next of kins of the deceased and Rs. 500 to the injured persons.

It is disrespect to the deceased to give Rs. 10 thousand to the next of their kins. But those who are injured and require costly medicines and treatment....(Interruptions)

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI (Garhwal) : Discussion is going on but the Hon. Minister is cutting jokes like this.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : It is absolutely wrong. Rather we were sitting and talking about discussing with the Prime Minister as to what more relief could be given only after listening to you.

[Translation]

MR. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHUNDURI: You go and talk outside. You should be aware of the facts. Why are you disturbing the House. You can talk outside.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : We were discussing that as to how they can be provided more relief.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, please ask him to go and talk outside...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : He has heard you.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI: When you are indulging in such act, how will you accept that you are doing the wrong things.

[English]

You do not have the moral courage to accept the mistake.

[Translation]

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Who is doing the wrong things?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI : You are indulging in gossiping and laughing here.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : Are we laughing?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI : Yes, Sir.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER : What are you talking?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please do not drag out this discussion.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT : In this context I would like to quote two lines from 'King Lear' written by Shakespeare.

[English]

"As flies to wanton boys,

So we are to Gods

They kill us for their sport"

[Translation]

People will laugh and they can laugh as they are the

rulers. But we are weeping for those innocent people who were killed in this rail accident. We cannot laugh even if we wish so My heart is weeping. The whole Firozabad, Agra, Mainpuri, whole region and the whole Country is weeping over it. I would recite these two lines of Shakespeare for those people who still have courage to laugh. You are in the ruling party and therefore, I request you to have mercy upon the people of country. Relief work for affected persons should be taken up on war-footing. Military can be called in if civil Administration has failed. But in the context of this accident military assistance is also proving-inadequate. In view of large number of affected persons, more assistance is required. I therefore, wish that relief work should be taken up on war-footing by calling the army so that all the facilities including medical treatment could be provided to victims

As I was saying, a Parliamentary committee should be constituted inquire into the accident which would fix the responsibility. Thereafter, a long-term policy should be framed to check recurrence of such accidents.

As some other Members have also pointed out, I would like to say that they should advise the Hon. Prime Minister to visit the place of accident. People would feel relieved even if the Hon. Prime Minister takes an aerial survey of the site of accident. The whole Governmental machinery would become active if the Hon. Prime Minister manage to spare a little time from his busy schedule to visit the place of accident It would also activate the Railway Ministry which is still going very slow in the matter of relief measures.

With these words, I once again request that this House should take appropriate decision regarding the Railway Ministry so that recurrence of such incidents could be checked. There have been a series of accident during the last six months. The whole Railway administration is paralysed. There is need to make the Railway administration efficient. You can earn money through scams later but at first, common man should be given facilities. If the Government is not in a position to provide necessary facilities, it should at least, be ensured that passengers travel in trains safely and their family members do not become orphan or homeless.

[English]

SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY (Puri) : Hon. Chairman, Sir, this is one of the worst train disasters in recent times where 300 people were killed and over 400 people have been injured. The unofficial death toll was estimated to be over 600. Many of the injured are in a very critical condition and no adequate medical assistance is extended by the Railways. The other passengers who are marginally or not affected are not provided with any relief till last evening.

Sir, the Railways and the State Government have failed to provide them rescue train; and even the State Government has failed to provide minimum facilities to

those who are not affected to come over to Delhi or to their respective places. There was no special train available for their relatives to reach the accident place till last evening. Even after 18 hours of the accident, the relief train has not reached the accident site and so, the relatives who are interested to go from Delhi to the place of accident could not reach the accident place to help their relatives.

Sir, it is alleged by some of the fellow-passengers who were travelling in the same train that the Purushottam Express was detained unnecessarily at Kanpur. In fact, all the trains were held up at Kanpur for about one hour to give way to a train in which Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the Minister was travelling; and this was one of the reason for this accident. The driver of the Purushottam Express was eager to make up the time while it was detained at Kanpur. I demand that this aspect should be inquired into and one judicial inquiry should be set up; and that the judicial inquiry should also take up the aspect as to why the train was detained at Kanpur.

It is the practice of the Railways to give this type of treatment to VIPs; and thus the Railways put the commuters to inconvenience. This should not have happened. It was just to help one of the Ministers that this train was detained for one hour. This should not have happened; and this is happening regularly in the Railways. I demand that there should be a judicial inquiry of all these irregularities. The ex-gratia payment should be paid at an enhanced rate.

Another thing to be looked into is that during the first six months of this year alone, a total of 199 people were killed and 500 people have been injured in train accidents in various parts of the country; and a majority of the accidents were caused due to the failure on the part of the Railways. The accident which happened yesterday is one of the worst train disaster of the country.

14.00 hrs

I demand that this Government should resign realising their moral responsibility. The entire country was shocked by this train accident whereas the Government and the entire ruling party were enjoying yesterday in Delhi. The Prime Minister had no time to reach the accident place. This accident is very much shocking; and irresponsible and this should not have happened. I demand that there should be a judicial inquiry to probe all the aspects of this accident.

[Translation]

SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV (Azamgarh) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the whole country including this House is grieved over the rail accident in Firozabad. While respecting the feelings of the people of the country, we deviated from the scheduled business of the House and have conveyed our condolences to the bereaved families and our best wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would also like to congratulate and thank those voluntary organisations who reached

there at odd hours in the night and provided the required assistance immediately. The people of the city and nearby areas also reached there immediately and provided every possible help like rescuing the injured, providing drinking water and donating blood for their treatment. This is the true face of our society. It is the hall mark of our society and nation that people voluntarily come forward to extend every possible help at the time of distress. I heartily wish that this kind of feeling would grow strong.

Mr. Chairman, it is the most ghastly accident in the history of Railways. In the report of Railway safety Performance, the number of railway accidents which took place from 1960 - 61 to last year, has been given. It also provides the number of people killed in railway accidents since 1965.

In 1965-66, 41 persons were killed and in 1970-71, 27 persons were killed. I am quoting these figures just to tell that how Railways is functioning in this country. Mismanagement in Railways is increasing day-by-day. I have already given the example of accidents which took place 30 years ago and in which 41 and 27 persons had died respectively. In 1980-81 a train had fallen into Bagmati river and 436 persons were killed in this accident. The report of this accident has just come. According to Railways Sources 300 persons have been killed. Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has told that she met a woman who was travelling by that train and as per her estimate, number of dead could go upto 1500.

SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM (Aligarh) : Their own sources are telling that the number has reached upto 1000.

SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV : Shrimati Sheela Gautam is saying that information about 1000 persons has come. I would like to say that it was the most ghastly and heart-rending accident during the last 35 years I am very sorry to say that Hon. Prime Minister has not cared to visit the place of accident which is just 125 Km away near Firozabad i.e. before Agra. We have read in newspapers that Hon. Prime Minister was advised not to visit the place of accident as it would create hurdle in relief and rescue operation. However it is not correct. One should not expect the people of this country that they would come to see the Prime Minister, leaving their work behind or they would keep themselves busy in providing security to the Hon. Prime Minister. Had the Hon. Prime Minister faced any security problem he could have taken sufficient security personnels alongwith him. He must have gone there. The site of accident is just 125 Km away from here. Neither the Hon. Prime Minister nor the Railway Minister visited there. It is correct that the dead could not have been brought back to life by his visit but it would have conveyed a message to the people of the country that the Government is concerned over this accident and it is doing everything possible at its level. It would have further consoled the people. When someone dies, people go to console the bereaved family and not to provide any assistance. They go to associate themselves with the hurt feelings of that family.

I feel that it is extreme insensitiveness on the part of the Govt. that a Minister of State, who was not even incharge of that ministry was sent there. A senior Cabinet Minister went there and after inspecting the site, came back. He could have stayed there for sometime. I remember that at the time of invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, a Cabinet Minister was sent there who stayed there for weeks. It activates the administration and the feelings of people get associated with the feelings of the affected persons. The Government should seek an apology. It is not a common thing. After all why is it happening. For the last 30-35 years the Railways has been earning credit for less number of accidents but about 400 railway accidents take place in the country annually. 401 train accidents in 1993-94, 414 in 1992-93, 444 in 1991-92, 446 in 1990-91, 456 in 1989-90 and 457 train accidents took place in 1988-89. Leave aside the number of train accidents in 1975-76 which was 768. Not less than 400 train accidents have been taking place in our country every year for the last 30-35 years. Why is it so? Cannot these be averted? It is quite astonishing that two trains should run simultaneously on one and the same railway track. Some eight-nine months ago, I was travelling by train from Lucknow last year. A locomotive stood stationary on the track at Moradabad station and our train collided with it. We fell down from our respective berths and the locomotive was completely burnt. In that accident an armyman was crushed to death in between the two bogies and a civilian also died. The victims of train accidents, no matter they may come from any part of the country, are our own brothers, sisters and children. I think the Government should take it seriously and make a statement on it. To my mind the Railway Board should be the foremost organisation to be sacked by the Government today. What is this board doing? Why do accidents take place regularly? Are there any technical difficulties involved?

Mr. Chairman, Sir, was not the rear red-light of the stationary train functioning? It is being said that the man in the cabin could not see whether the train had crossed or not. It is also being said that the track was not properly changed. The reason of the mistake is difficult to ascertain even after so much time has elapsed. It could be ascertained from the cabin as to whether the machine was defunct or the track was not changed. Whether the rear light of the stationary train was not in order or was off? Many rumours have been set afloat about it in order to create confusion in the minds of people.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, Rawat ji and Katheria ji had visited the accident site. It was stated in the House that there were no drinking water facilities there and doctors could not reach the spot. Could not the doctors be sent there by pressing helicopters into service? Was the blood supplied from Delhi or not? The Government should make a statement on it. There is the army and there are helicopters which could immediately be pressed into service for taking the injured to the hospitals. The Government is mum about it. Paying a compensation of Rs.10,000 to the next of kin of the hundreds of deceased

is not enough. Have arrangements been made for taking the dead bodies to their respective homes? Why were not other special trains immediately pressed into service from Puri, Mathura and Agra? The relatives of the dead and injured passengers could have reached the accident site immediately free of cost if the timings of the special trains touching different stations were announced on the radio. Was this done? The Hon. Prime Minister's statement makes no mention of it. Such a tragic accident was not taken seriously. The Government cannot absolve itself from this culpability. Such accidents are a common sight in our country. It is being repeatedly demanded that the old tracks and their worn out wooden sleepers should be changed and new, modern techniques adopted. No steps are being taken for so many years now to prevent the collision of two trains on the same track. Why capable personnel are not appointed? Do the employees work till late in the night? This House and the country should be apprised in detail about the steps taken on all that. I hope that arrangements would be soon made for extending medical assistance, transporting the dead bodies and ferrying their relatives to and from the accident site. I hope that this should have been done so far and in case it is otherwise, then that is very unfortunate.

I want that a Supreme Court judge assisted by a committee of specialists should conduct its inquiry. A new confidence can be generated in the countrymen if steps are taken to ascertain the need of reforms in the Railways, measures of checking accidents, strengthening safety, detecting the mistake and fixing responsibility. I join my voice with others in demanding the resignation of the Hon. Prime Minister in the capacity of the Minister of Railways. He should rather resign from premiership because had this portfolio been with some other Minister, he would have been asked to resign today. The Hon. Prime Minister and the Railway Minister cannot escape from his responsibility. I hope that he will keep in mind all these feelings expressed here when he steps into the House.

I would, once again, like to convey my heartfelt condolences to the families of those who died in the accident. I would pray for speedy recovery of the injured passengers. With these words, I hope that the Government would take such steps as would generate confidence into the people about the safety of train travel because their confidence has been shattered, as two trains run on one and the same track and ram into each other. Steps should be taken to restore that confidence.

[English]

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Thank you, Hon. Chairperson, for giving me an opportunity to speak.

I join my voice with all the speakers, who have spoken so far, in expressing my deep sorrow in conveying sympathies to the bereaved families. As a mother, who lost her only child, that too when the child was only 11

months old, I can imagine how those mothers who have lost their sons and daughters in this accident may be feeling. But it is not enough to yell only. It is not enough to express condolence or sympathy alone. What we are doing today and what we will do in the future are the most important things.

It has been said by the experts that both the human fault as well as the mechanical fault might have led to this particular accident. A lot of things have been said about the mechanical fault. We have been shouting about the way these engines are being maintained and the way these signals have proved wrong a number of times. But who cares for it? A number of times trains have stopped because of the faulty signals. For hours together trains keep standing because of faulty signals. I do not know why these things are not monitored.

Let me now come to another peculiar thing known as the compensation business. Whenever an accident takes place, the number of persons who die in that accident is always understated by the authorities. We know the same thing happened during Kalubathan accident. In this particular accident mostly the West Bengal people were involved. We all know in actual how many people died and what was the ultimate figure which was reported by the Government. If you go to that place, a number of them are still roaming about for compensation. This is a fact. I would like to know what is the guarantee that the same will not happen in this particular case also. I would also like to know what all has been done in the meantime to rectify the situation.

As far as the quantum of compensation is concerned, what is the amount payable under such circumstances? As per the Railways Accident Compensation Rule, 1990 the amount of compensation payable in case of death and injury making a person unable to do any work, is Rs. 2 lakh. Let us now have a look at the other figure, In 1993-94 the number of persons killed was 93 and the compensation amount that was paid to the families of the deceased as well as injured was only Rs.178 lakh. Am I to understand that there is some jugglery? However big an expert Manmohan Singhji may be, he cannot make Rs. 1 as Rs. 2.

No Reserve Bank Governor will agree. This is the situation. How it be met? These were the rules and this is the actual activity. Who is accountable for this, if not the Government?

Well, I wish Shri Jaffer Sharief a quick recovery. But I must say that I cannot ever forget what he had said after the Kalubathan accident. He had said, "How is the Railways responsible and how is the Railway Minister responsible for it? Who else is responsible? If there are accidents occurring everywhere, who else is responsible for them? If it they who board the trains who are to be held responsible for them? Who else but the Government is responsible for running the Railways charging money, less or more whatever it is, from the public? It is they who

are squarely responsible. I fully share the feelings of the young man who was crying. Why could not the Railway Minister visit the spot yesterday? The present Minister for Railways is our Hon. Prime Minister. Yesterday was Rajiv Gandhi's birthday. Had Rajiv Gandhi been alive would he have liked the situation to be dealt with in this way? Just one person less in the birthday celebrations would have meant the Minister in-charge and the Prime Minister going there. How would Rajiv Gandhi have behaved? I know the human mind. Despite political differences, I am sure if there is his soul he must have felt very sorry yesterday that the Prime Minister could not visit the spot. Why could he not go? He could he have just made a sortie and come back and done his work as usual as it was Sunday and as the accident occurred in the middle of the night. There was enough time for him. Why was it not possible? Why was it not done? I do not know.

There is a funny rule in regard to railway compensation that cases of persons run over by train in the event of a collision between trains and road vehicles at level-crossings in which railway passengers are not involved, are not covered under these rules and as such no compensation is paid to persons injured in such accidents. Well, a large number of accident actually take place in such circumstances. Suppose a train is on its way, the level crossing is left open and suddenly accident occurs in which people travelling in both the road vehicle and the train die. Who is responsible for it? Why do you not pay any compensation for them? What is the crime of the passengers of the bus which is rammed into by the train, that they die in an accident but they cannot claim any compensation? This was the rule going on till 1990. Many accidents have taken place and it can be seen as to how many were level crossing accidents. I do not understand this. You make on kind of rules which you do not act upon and you make some foolish kind of rules which rule out the people who should get compensation. In this case, I feel and I can quite well imagine that a large number of deaths have occurred, as Bhavna said already, there was a confirmation of 1000 deaths. I was told by a lady Congress Member from Orissa who was travelling, that it may go up to 1500. May be in the darkness she could not see everything but then, somebody's impression is that. As to how many surely it could not be to the figure given out by the Government today. Why this understatement? Why does the Government cheat people like that in the case of such a tragedy?

I have already spoken about the compensation and delay in immediate relief. Really those who said this are absolutely right. It was a matter of 125 km only. How many vehicles are used for the security of the Prime Minister and other Ministers?

Even if as many vehicles as possible could have started immediately after the accident, they could have carried on and on and many people might have reached. From the middle of the night upto now. They could have taken much more number of people than the number of people who have actually reached. Even the cars might

have reached. They are now giving an example that they have enough trains upto now. They could have rushed and a lot of relief materials could also have been taken there. Why did they not take the relief materials? They are saying that relief materials had been rushed on a war-footing. If this is what their war-footing is all about, then I am afraid to think that if a real war starts, how shall they be dealing with it? If such an accident is supposed to be dealt with like this and if you call it as 'war-footing', Heaven help us.

So, at the end, I would like to mention, without going into the details-because many of my friends have already stated-about the question of the Prime Minister's resignation. Yes, we are demanding his resignation. I would like to point one thing. our Prime Minister seem to be very fond of astrology. He often goes to consult astrologers, including the infamous, Chandraswami. If astrology has any meaning for him, I would rather say, just after his attainment of Railway portfolio-since such a disaster has taken place, let him believe in his astrology-this disaster has taken place. This co-incidence is very dangerous. Therefore, perhaps, it would have been, not only in good grace but also for his future astrological calculations also to straightaway resign and let somebody else take the responsibility. This is my strong feeling.

With these few words, I again demand that immediate and adequate relief be rushed without any further delay.

SHRI P.C. CHACKO (TRICHUR) : Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to say a few words on this tragic rail accident.

Sir, the shocking tragedy that took place at Firozabad in the early hours of yesterday, was the worst ever tragedy in the history of the Indian Railways. I express my deep sympathies to the bereaved families.

Sir, while joining the Hon. Members who expressed their shock and grief on this tragic accident, I would like to say that this is a time for introspection; this is a time for all Parties, in this House, to put their heads together and collectively think as to how the increasing number of rail accidents can be effectively prevented. From the reports which had reached us, this tragedy, which had occurred at Firozabad yesterday shows that there is a human failure and negligence. This is something which could have been avoided. This increases the seriousness of the situation. This enhances the shock and grief of all of us. The way in which this accident had occurred at Firozabad yesterday, and if the Railways feel that there is no way out and such a situation cannot be avoided, then I would say that the Indian Railway system itself is totally unsafe for transporting the public in this country.

Sir, the Kalindi Express which was, due to some technical reasons, stranded on the main line, rammed into by the Purushottam Express. When this train was passing through a railway station, green signal was given to it to bypass and the train which was running at 100 kms. per hour, rammed into the back of the Kalindi Express.

That shows one passenger train was passing thinking a green signal was given. That is how this train was allowed to pass through and rammed at the stranded train which was on the main line. Sir, such an accident which occurred just half a kilometre away from the main railway station which is not far off from Delhi or if such a thing happens, then the question of safety device comes.

I think, the Railways owe an explanation to the House and to the whole country as to what safety arrangements are prevailing in the Railways.

Sir, when many accidents are happening, all of us express our grief, sorrow and shock and we discuss about the safety requirements and all these matters.

Sir, I join with many other Members in the Opposition, who have expressed today that the Indian Railway lack safety measures and whoever is responsible for that should be punished. It is the desire of this House that the Indian Railways should take adequate security measures to prevent such accidents.

Sir, from 1990, for the last four years, a number of accidents had taken place in the Indian Railways and thousands of people lost their lives. The last biggest accident prior to this Firozabad accident had happened in my State, in Quilon when one whole train was plunged into a lake in Ashtamudi. This accident took place in 1988 and it is known as Peruman tragedy. I remember that the Railways, after the persistent demands from the State, from the various public organisations and parties, had ordered for a judicial inquiry into that incident. It is the human nature that we may forget all these things after some time. When the Inquiry Report came out, a strange theory that a tornado took place and that is why this accident took place. That was the strange explanation given by the Railways. Sir, I do not believe this kind of basic errors, which is happening in the system. If the human failure or the mechanical failure, whichever is happening here, is not rectified or detected in time, it would be very unfortunate. Sir, only half a kilometre away, on the main line, one train was stranded and whether that line was clear or not was not known to the railway station which is only half a kilometre away. And when another passenger train, which was passing by, without knowing, without seeing and without verifying whether the main line was clear or not, they just showed the green signal and this train was allowed to pass by. This kind of a thing is unpardonable.

It is said that 230 people had lost their lives and this is according to the statement of the Prime Minister. I wish the number of people who lost their lives is not more than what the Prime Minister has said. But we are reading from the newspapers that 400 people had lost their lives and more than 400 people were seriously injured. We also understand from the reports that more than 11 compartments were totally smashed and we do not know how many people are still trapped in this charred compartment. Shri Mallikarjun visited this accident site

and has come here now. The whole House is anxious to hear from him as to what exactly had happened and whether all the dead bodies are being recovered from the accident site. Sir, it is likely, from all the reports and the circumstantial evidences, that the number of dead persons is likely to go further and we wish that it does not happen. But, whatever it is, this tragedy that happened in Firozabad is not far off from Delhi. The circumstances which surround this tragedy is more tragic than the tragedy itself. Limbs of the victims were strewn around and the whole area is filled with stink of decomposed human bodies and sufficient medical attention is not reaching there. When we are reading all these things in the newspapers, we cannot imagine something more shocking than this. We would like to know how it happened and how the Government reacted to it. When the tragedy like this, which cannot be explained in any language, happens, if we are going to see such tragic accidents through the coloured glasses, it is unfortunate and we have reduced this discussion on the most tragic incident when it is being discussed in this House. The whole country is watching how this House is taking up this issue. But, unfortunately, some friends are trying to see even the accidents through the coloured glasses of their political opinions and political views. Some Members were very quick in demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister.

I have no objection. All the Opposition parties have got every right to demand the resignation of the Prime Minister. But yesterday having taken stock of the situation, the Prime Minister in his wisdom thought that his visit to the accident site, probably, may disrupt the arrangements which are being made for evacuating the victims. When hundreds of people who are trapped under the jammed railway coaches, when people were trying all their best to take out the dead bodies and to find out who is who and what is what, at that time, a visit of a VIP to that spot, how it will affect the local situation, everyone who is here and those who demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister can very well understand. Sir, immediately, Mr. Mallikarjun was asked to go. Unfortunately the Railway Minister is not in the country. He is to undergo a heart surgery in a hospital in London tomorrow. All of us are equally sad and unhappy. But Mr. Mallikarjun was an experienced person. He was in charge of the Railways. The Prime Minister immediately asked Mr. Mallikarjun to visit the spot with the Railway Board Chairman and also Mr. Antulay, who is the Health Minister. He was also asked to visit the site and to make all arrangements to rush the medical relief vans, medical facilities, medicines, blood and all kinds of things. Whatever possible we can do is to be done. That is the instruction given. Every two hours, the Prime Minister was discussing with the top officials and giving instructions. And some people who were finding fault with the Prime Minister said that the Prime Minister did not visit. I am not here to deny or agree to what they have said but this is a tragedy. We have to approach the tragedy as it is a tragedy, not as a political event or we cannot colour this incident or we cannot assess this matter through our political opinions.

There are sufficient provisions for relief operations and assistance to be given to them. According to the existing rules, immediate assistance of Rs.5000 can be given. The Prime Minister immediately said, 'No, at least Rs. 10,000 be given'. This is not the final compensation or anything. Why should anybody be blamed for this? According to the existing Statue book, whether the accident is happening here or in some other State where somebody else is ruling the country, the rule is that an immediate relief of Rs.5000 can be given. The Prime Minister immediately said, 'No, Rs.10,000 should be given as an immediate assistance and whatever possible assistance can be given, it should be given'. We should analyze in all sincerity the facts whether the Government has done what a Government should do on such an occasion. But according to my limited information, I know that a Minister was sent and another Union Cabinet Minister was asked to go to the spot and all health facilities which the Health Department of the Government of India is having were placed at the disposal at this accident site. But whether the Chief Minister came in a helicopter, whether the Prime Minister could have made an aerial survey, is this the way we assess the situation like this? I am sorry about it.

We lost nearly 300 of our brethren. A team of sportsmen who were coming after a training whose name I read from the newspapers, are all great assets to our country. They all lost their lives. Nearly 30 sportsmen and three coaches who are well-known coaches have lost their lives in this accident and any loss of life of any individual is not less important than that of another individual. But to everyone who lost their lives in this accident, everyone who suffered injuries in this accident, our heart goes out to them - to the bereaved families, to those victims and to their relatives and to all the people. But railways safety measures should be there to strengthen that. That should be the resolve which this House has to decide and direct the Government to take at this time. Sir, there should be automatic arrangements. If one line is not clear, within half a kilometer distance, another train should not be allowed to pass by. It is not something a guard can show a green signal. That should not be the system. The system should be such that there should be automatic arrangements for not allowing a train to pass through when one main line is jammed or one line is not clear. So without going into such details, if instructions are given, if signals are given, then that shows that our signalling system is very primitive. It is very ineffective. Mr. Somnath Chatterjee also, most of the time when he was participating in this debate showed his political overtones. He is also the Chairman of Standing Committee on Railways. Ferozabad is not far off. Mr. Yadavji has said that it is very close to Delhi where this tragedy happened. Some people were saying about the accountability, especially Mr. Arjun Singh who very recently found out the meaning of accountability. He asked, what the Government is doing. We take the responsibility. This Government is accountable for this accident. I say that but at the same time, the Chairman of Standing Committee on Railways also can visit the site. The Leader of the Opposition can also visit

the site. I am not blaming anybody.

I am not trying to say this as my Party's opinion or view. It is not like that. I wish this discussion has been above all kinds of political considerations. It is a tragedy. It is a big tragedy. It is a big tragedy in the history of the Indian Railways. Forgetting all party views we have to sympathise with the victims and we have to request the Government to take all the steps which the Government has to take. Medical relief, compensation and all kinds of relief measures are to be taken. If there are any lapses on the part of the Government, the Government should explain them.

If in such a situation the Party leaders, that too responsible senior leaders are standing up in this House and deliberating in a political manner it is most unfortunate.

I once again express my deepest sympathies and my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families on behalf of my Party.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have to inform that Shri Mallikarjun, Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs will intervene in the discussion and will place the latest facts and figures before the House. The Prime Minister will reply to the discussion at about five o'clock. I, therefore, request the Hon. Members to be brief in their speeches so that more Members can be accommodated.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : I will be very brief.

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN (Gobichettipalayam) : I want to speak.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : I will speak after him.

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN (Gobichettipalayam) : Mr. Chairman, I am shocked and grieved over the ghastly and devastating accident involving the Purushottam Express at Ferozabad on Sunday morning. I express my condolence to the bereaved families of the victims. There are conflicting reports about the death toll. The death toll range from 300 to 1000 according to various reports. A large number of persons were injured.

I demand that the Railway Ministry must inform Parliament about the actual death toll in the accident. While reporting the figures, I also urge upon the Ministry not to tone down or decrease the number of deaths in order to save the quantum of compensation. The Railways have been adopting this kind of practices during the previous accidents. Such an attitude is inhuman.

14.42 hrs.

[SHRI P.C. CHAIKO in the Chair]

Sir, modern means of communication should be provided at the lower level like linemen. If modern communications have been provided, the guard or the driver of Kalindi Express could have intimated the matter to the Station Master of the nearby Railway Station who, in turn, would have taken steps to stop the Purushottam Express.

I would like to express the need to modernise the Railway network system at the lowest level so that such ghastly accidents can be averted. I also point out that the compensation being paid now is very low. It should be of the order of Rs. 2 lakh, to be paid to the relatives of the victims of the accident. The compensation should be hiked because the deaths have taken place due to gross negligence of the Railway Department. The Railway Minister, though he is in London, is responsible for the accident and he should tender his resignation immediately.

This is not the first accident this year. More than four accidents have taken place during the last one year. A responsible person should be appointed to inquire into this accident. The Government is careless in this type of issues. It has not taken a lesson from the previous accidents and it has failed in its duty. I condemn this type of attitude of the Government. The Prime Minister must immediately visit the place and review all the arrangements.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH (Aonla) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, thousands of persons have died in the train accident occurred in Firozabad. This accident has caused due to high handedness and gross negligence on the part of the Railway Department. Perhaps, Railway Minister has gone abroad for the treatment of his heart and I do not know as to whether the Hon. Prime Minister has heart or he is heartless. Had he been kind hearted he would have certainly gone there and consoled the bereaved people. I think this is the Department having heartless people. I think some officers of Railway Ministry are sitting in the gallery and they will definitely give reply in writing to my query that as to how the another train came on the same track when inter-locking system has been introduced and how it was given green signal? Why the trains had not reached the station first? When the first train was stationed on the track for one and a half hour then why the other station did not inform that no train should be allowed to come from last station? When they knew that Purushottam Express runs at a speed of 100 K.M. per hour and Kalindi Express runs with less speed, then why it was not stopped at Firozabad Railway station itself? It should have been diverted to loop line. It seems that responsibility will be fixed on a cabinman or any other lower rank employee. Now-a-days all systems are controlled from the control room. Chief Controller Supervises all the operations and

he has a map of railway lines before him, he can see that which train is going to which direction and where it has to be stopped. Without his directions no train can move even for an inch then whether the Chief Controller was sleeping or was unable to manage the situation? An accident like this, is very painful. I would like to know as to whether the railway officers do not monitor the trains running under their charge? Whether red light was not available in the Guard's compartment and it was switched on or not? Whether its kerosene oil was stolen? Whether it was lit or not and if yes, then it could have been noticed from so many kilometers and the train could be stopped.

The Government makes very tall claims here. I would like to know that when such fast trains are being run then, why air-brakes have not been fixed in them? And if they are fixed, then, why they were not used? No emergency brakes and air-brakes have been fixed in these trains. Therefore, I would like to know as to what the Railway Ministry, Railway Board and Traffic members are doing? Railways Department is being exploited in several ways.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am openly levelling charges against Railway Department for all this. Why all this is happening? Why this Department is so negligent? Corruption is prevailing in the whole Railway Department from top to bottom. Everyone connected with Railway Department is being suspected. The department has become victim of bureaucracy. Today, one cannot get a stall for minor work without giving bribe. Not only this, even one has to approach a Minister for installing a stall or kiosk. In the recently introduced catering service also they prefer their relatives and they should be from a particular area only. Railway employees are very much annoyed with this system.

The Hon. Prime Minister who is holding the charge of Railway Ministry also, does not possess the quality of solving the problems because whichever task he undertakes goes haywire. Recently he has taken the charge of Kashmir affairs, but the situation there is worsening day by day. A big train accident has taken place day before yesterday. There is a saying in our area "Jahan Jaye Bhooka, Wahan Pare Sookha." He is not sensitive even to these things. He did not visit there. I fear as to whether this train accident has been caused due to human error or there is some deep conspiracy behind it.

Any big conspiracy cannot be ruled out behind this accident as hundreds of persons have lost their lives. When a bomb blast is there only 10-20 or 50 people succumb to death but such accidents cause death of thousands of people. I fear as well as hesitate to say this but my mind is compelling me to say. Now-a-days we read in newspapers that two or three ministers will be assigned organisational work in the party and they will be dropped from the Cabinet. Names of Agriculture Minister, Railway Minister and Civil Aviation Minister are among them. I think, they are being termed inefficient, therefore,

they might have also thought that as they are being said inefficient, hence they would not let others become successful and create chaotic circumstances and as a result thereof such a major accident took place in their regime as had never occurred during the last four years of the tenure of this Government. Such a big accident has taken place for the first time and the Hon. Prime Minister is responsible for that.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, just now some of my friends were demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister. I do not agree with them on this point because he will never himself resign as he has no morality. Resignation is asked from a man who has morality. When this Government has no morality, then why it should be asked to resign. An era of morality had already been over after Lal Bahadur Shastriji. Now, this Government cannot claim morality therefore, he cannot resign. This Government neither has any morality nor the sensitiveness so that the Hon. Prime Minister make a precedent to show the path to others. Please forgive me, the people of the country are taking a note of all your acts. Today, most of the people in this country are against this Government. Thousands of people must not have cooked their food and lighted their houses in mourning. Their curse will lead to the defeat of this Government. Though, you may not resign, yet the people of the country will dismiss this Government in the ensuing elections. After all, this Government is not entitled to remain in power. Therefore, I do not demand for his resignation as he has no morality.

Hon. Chairman, Sir, I would like to say one more thing because mention regarding compensation has been made here. The matter of compensation is very sensitive. Compensation will be given to those only whose names are included in the reservation list. The people other than those are not being considered as passengers by the Government. Kalindi Express starts from Farukhabad and most of the bogies are general therein. Probably, one or two bogies are airconditioned or three-tier sleeper. On what basis, the Government will give compensation to those passengers who were travelling by these trains after purchasing tickets but their names are not included in the reservation list? What will the Government do for those who boarded these trains from stations in-between? The Government must not have a list containing their names. What procedure will be adopted to give them compensation? Now the Hon. Minister will say that the compensation will be given to those people only whose names appear in the reservation list but the Purushottam Express also has general bogies. A number of passengers must have been travelling without getting their seats reserved. What will happen to them? I would like to submit that the Prime Minister or the concerned Minister should make a clear statement in this regard. The Government should find out the names of the places in the case of those passengers who had boarded this train from Farukhabad or from the stations in-between after purchasing tickets for Delhi. If Government provides compensation on the basis of reservation list, many people

will be deprived of compensation because this train is unreserved except one or two sleeper bogies. Just eight days back, I had travelled by this train from Farukhabad station. Though it is Kalindi Express, but there is no electricity and water facility therein. The entire train was destroyed. Whether the Government has made any arrangements to hand over the dead bodies to their relatives and protect those from decaying or eaten by birds? What arrangements are being made for their postmortem and to hand over them to their families?

Mr. Chairman, Sir, if anybody who belongs to Puri and has died in this accident and his dead body is lying here, how it will be sent there, how its funeral will take place? I would like to ask as to whether any arrangements have been made in this regard? The Hon. Prime Minister has merely said that 271 people have lost their lives in this accident. But it has been published in the newspapers today that death toll has reached nearly one thousand. What arrangements have been made for them?

14.56 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will not take much time. I would like to repeat my demands that while replying to the questions, the Hon. Prime Minister should reply keeping in mind these points that how many passengers were travelling in general bogies i.e. the number of tickets sold at the starting point and at in-between railway stations, the places to which the deceased passengers belonged. An inquiry should be made in this matter and people should be made aware of the actual position. There are so many dead bodies of the passengers who cannot be identified. How they will be identified?

Drinking water is not available there. What can be more callous than this. No doctor has reached there. The Railway Ministry has remained inactive. Blood could not be arranged. The local people queued up to donate blood. You could not make arrangement of doctors to take their blood. You did not send a helicopter from Delhi. You failed to bring those who were seriously injured by helicopter to Delhi for treatment. You should have done this. The Uttar Pradesh Government provided its helicopter. But not the Central Government. It was busy enjoying itself. It was busy celebrating birthday. It was preoccupied with renaming Connaught Place and Connaught Circus. I also feel happy when someone's birthday is celebrated. But not at the cost of thousands of injured. I do not see any use in asking for the Prime Minister's resignation or appealing to his moral sense. Because there is no use of appealing to the Congress party on morality. But I condemn the Prime Minister and the Government strongly. Had he any morality he would have resigned immediately.

With this I conclude and thank you for giving me time to speak.

SHRI RABI RAY (Kendrapada) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, today the entire nation and this House is mourning

over this tragedy and we are discussing here as to what relief can be provided to the families of those who have died in this accident. All eyes are centred on Lok Sabha. We are debating here as how to do justice to them? Yesterday, I received a telephone call at 12 o'clock that Dr. Santosh Kumar Sahu, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, who was coming from Cuttack, was killed. But we did not know that so many people had died, at that time, yesterday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all I seek your permission to inform the House that, Jagannathpuri is also known as Purushottam. Hence the name Purushottam Express.

15.00 hrs.

Purushottam Express runs between Puri and Delhi. I want to tell you that as to how callous and indifferent the authorities are to this train. Purushottam Express originates from Orissa and comes to Delhi after crossing, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Two months back, dacoits stopped and looted the train in broad day light, at 2 p.m. People kept shouting but the railway authorities remained indifferent. The dacoits looted the train for three hours. I would like to ask you that those who come from Orissa, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh are second class citizens? This can be gauged from the fact that the Railway Ministry neither apologised nor provided any relief to them. This I say to tell you how the passengers of Purushottam Express are treated. They are subjected to inhuman treatment.

Was it not duty of the Central Government to start the relief work on a war-footing on receiving the information regarding this accident yesterday? The Prime Minister, who also holds the charge of Railway Ministry should have thought of contacting the Chief Minister and should have sent a Cabinet Minister to supervise all the rehabilitation work and to look after the relief work. Would the Government be able to do this ?

[English]

Have they performed their duties on a war-footing? Because an extraordinary situation demands an extraordinary action.

[Translation]

You will agree with this but nothing has been done. In his statement, the Prime Minister had said 150 people had died. I thank the print media for publishing that 300 people had died and 300 were injured. This was published in the morning newspapers. More people must have died after this. Some of the injured may have died, since it was mentioned in the T.V. that 135 people had died. The number of those killed kept on increasing. A passenger from Orissa had made a statement that attempts were made to extricate the dead bodies. But no attempts were made to take those out who were still alive. Thus, the Government has been callous.

Why was this work not done on a war-footing? The

Government would agree that this was not done. As if we have become insensitive. People are dying, they are in difficulty and we have lost our sensitivity. We are not sensitive to their pains and their difficulties. How and why this negligence and insensitivity has come? I want to say that the view of the people is that, there is widespread corruption in Railways. Shri Manmohan Singhji and other Cabinet Ministers may have also heard about this. Whereas we feel proud that India has the largest number of public undertakings. There is widespread corruption in the country. Corruption gives birth to inefficiency. Corruption and inefficiency are inseparable. I am aware that our Railway Minister is in a hospital in London for treatment. But I would like to ask as to whether it is the manner in which the Government of India works. Till two months back, the Prime Minister had the portfolio of Industry, Defence and Health. Have you heard of any similar example in the World, where the Prime Minister looks after so many portfolios. One Minister of State, who was the member of Rajya Sabha, has since retired. Was it not necessary to have continued with the competent Minister of State thereafter? Can a single Minister efficiently look after such a big Ministry, like Railways. In the absence of a Minister, he comes to Lok Sabha to make statements. Even today he is sitting to make a statement. According to my knowledge this is the most inefficient Government, since independence.

[English]

The most inefficient Government the country has ever seen since Independence.

[Translation]

Inefficiency is the main reason which causes irresponsibility and which results in accidents. But the Government of India remains indifferent.

Shri Manmohan Singhji is sitting here. After the liberalisation, since 1991, the Government had made up its mind to remain indifferent to the problems of the people. Because privatisation would solve all the problems. It is the policy of liberalisation to go in for privatisation and to wash their hand of all responsibilities. I want to give this information to the House that at present each station is given on a contract to the contractor.

The selling of tickets at Bombay's Bandra station is given on contract. Therefore, I want to say that the work was not done on a war-footing. The corruption has increased. We believe in Parliamentary democracy. The Congress also believes in Parliamentary democracy. Under this system we hold the Ministers responsible, not the officials. There was a scam of Rs. 5000 crore. The JPC gave its report. But no accountability was fixed.

15.08 hrs.

(Shri Tara Singh in the chair)

Similarly, there was a sugar scandal. In this also the Government showed no interest in fixing the accountability

on those who were responsible for that and, the Government ignored the ethics of Parliamentary democracy. Our colleagues, sitting on that side ask me not to raise the issue of fixing the accountability. But I say that without keeping in view the principle of accountability, can we have this debate?

I want to draw your attention to a train accident that took place in 1956. In that year an accident took place, which is also called Madras-Tuticorin train disaster. I am saying this because of Manmohan Singhji, so that he may understand this. At that time Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Prime Minister. It is said:

[English]

It is most painful to report - he is reporting to Parliament, this House that as result of the accident, the death toll amounts to 144.

[Translation]

In 1956, 144 persons died in Madras Tuticorin disaster. At that time Jawahar Lalji was the Prime Minister and Lal Bahadurji was the Railway Minister. Earlier a train accident took place at Mehboob nagar and he requested Nehruji for resigning over it. Nehruji refused and said to him

[English]

'I do not want you to resign.'

[Translation]

Subsequently this accident took place. Today the Cabinet Minister Shri Manmohan Singh is also present here. I would like to present this before him, his colleagues and the whole Parliament. Lal Bahadur Shastriji was a moral Minister and a model Prime Minister. In this Parliament I would like to read out, his letter addressed to the Prime Minister :-

[English]

"My dear Panditji,

I am sorry I have to approach you again with this letter. You know that another very serious railway accident has occurred. It is a strange coincidence that this recent accident should have taken place in, more or less, a similar circumstance. And it has pained me most that another grim tragedy should have occurred so soon after the Mehboobnagar accident. The number of casualties is already much higher than in the former. I do not know what figure it will touch, and it has not been possible to remove all the debris so far. And then there are many who are grievously injured. I can very well realise the concern of the people and of Parliament about this very sad and shocking disaster. You were generous enough not to accept my resignation when I tendered it last time and I do not wish, to embarrass you again. But, I do feel that it would be good for me and for the Government as whole if I

quietly quit the office I hold. It would to a great extent, ease the people's minds. I hope you will be good enough to consider my request."

[Translation]

He had tendered his resignation over the Mehboobnagar accident as well. But as in the later accident 144 persons had died, he requested Jawahar Lal Nehruji to accept his resignation. The reply given by Jawahar Lal Nehru is the legacy of our Parliament. I would like to say to the Members of Congress party that we should not forget this legacy of our country and the Parliament.

[English]

We are here to follow this legacy.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru is reporting to Lok Sabha.

"On receipt of this letter I talked to him also last night and I saw the great distress in his mind and the burden that he was carrying. Afterwards I thought of it again and I came to the conclusion that it would be better for me to accept his resignation.....

SOME HON. MEMBERS : No, no.

SHRI RABI RAY : That means, the House says : We are not accepting his resignation.

SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU : If I may put it more correctly, it would be better for me to advise the President to accept his resignation, not because....

SHRI RABI RAY : Dr. Manmohan Singhji, please listen.

... not because, I hold him responsible - obviously not - I have already spoken in high terms of his work, the joint work that we have done together; I have the highest regard for him and I am quite sure that in one capacity or another we shall be comrades in the future and will work together- but I do feel more from the broader point of view of constitutional propriety that we should set an example in this matter and that no men should think that whatever might happen we carry on in the same way without being affected by it. We are affected by it. It has been a difficult decision for me, but I came to the conclusion in the small hours of the night and I thought it right to convey it at the earliest possible opportunity to this House. I proposed to recommend to the President to accept the resignation of my colleague, the Railway Minister. But I shall ask him to continue his work for a few days till other arrangements can be made."

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, Sir, my question is.

[English]

Should we abdicate our responsibility as Members of Lok Sabha?

[Translation]

Lok Sabha represents the people of this country. Poor and common passengers died in this accident, not any millionaire. Would we forget the precedent laid by Hon. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastriji in this House 39 years ago wherein they had displayed the sense of accountability towards people? Whether those policies would be ignored?

Sir, I was listening to the debate today. Members of our party were asking for resignation of the concerned minister Hon. Prime Minister who is holding the charge of Railway Minister is my friend but if we do not seek his resignation over it following earlier set policy the people would say that -

[English]

They are cynics.

[Translation]

Then how we would be able to strengthen the democracy in this country? Could you suggest any other alternative for it? This debate will conclude after sometime and become meaningless. In view of this fact humbly

[English]

We demand the resignation of the Prime Minister, here and now, in view of the precedent set by the late lamented Lal Bahadur Shastri and confirmed by the late lamented Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

[Translation]

Therefore, I am pained to comment on the development in this country. We are elected to Lok Sabha and entrusted with certain responsibilities. Sometimes I feel puzzled to think about the future of this country especially when we, the people of ruling party as well as those from opposition benches do not fulfill our responsibility and accountability. I, personally, honour the opinion of Hon. Prime Minister and he has another title with him i.e. the Prime Minister and the leaders of this House. In this hour of crisis today we are going to debate the issue of criminalisation of Politics. I would like to say that there is a nexus and no one knows about the number of mafia operating in the railway contracts. I, therefore, appeal to all the Members, especially those in ruling party, as they have more responsibility to share and we are here merely for name sake - I am asking Shri Manmohan Singh in particular as he is cabinet Minister - whether he would support this demand of resignation. In absence of the resignation, this debate would not reach any conclusion and prove to be a futile discussion.

On behalf of all the people of this country I would like to say that we should bring together all our forces to counter the challenge posed before the country.

The precedent laid by Lal Bahadur Shastriji is before us. At that time 144 persons were killed. Where this accident took toll of more than 500 lives. Nitishji was saying that the number could be 1000. Yesterday Nitishji was coming from Bihar and the route of his train was diverted. The train was running at a speed of 15 km. per hour. Thousands of passengers were taken on abandoned track. There were chances of accident on it. By the grace of God that accident did not take place but who would have been held responsible if any accident had taken place. A member of Parliament, who is also a Chairman can not make a false statement.

I would like to say that in his reply Hon. Prime Minister would certainly make the alternative arguments in view of all these points if he had any. There would be no other alternative except his resignation, as per chance the charge of Railway Ministry is with Hon. Prime Minister and therefore, he should tender his resignation. I demand his resignation and with this I conclude.

[English]

SHRI A. CHARLES (TRIVANDRUM) : Sir, it is with a deep sense of sorrow, pain and agony that all the Members of this House, in one voice, are discussing the worst train accident that has happened in the history of Indian Railways.

Sir, the initial reports that have come....(Interruptions) Sir, I am sorry that under such a cruel and tragic circumstance, the debate has gone to a level of scoring political points. I am so sad about the whole thing. I had been listening to the Hon. former Speaker whom I revere and he was speaking from the heart; and immediately after that the comments like this have come, I do not know why we are stooping down like this. I cannot express my anguish. There are times in the life of a person when one finds himself extremely difficult to give vent to his feelings or to express what is in his heart; words cannot explain the sorrow and the pain of the bereaved. It is very sad that some MPs have taken it in a very lighter vein. I am compelled to make this observation because of some comments that have come from that side.

Sir, the initial reports that have come say that 300 persons were dead and 400 have been injured. But the number may be fairly large; and only after the rescue operations are over, we will be able to find out what exactly is the total number of beloved persons who are no more, who are seriously injured and the persons with minor injuries and about the loss that the nation has suffered.

It is only in last May, one major accident has occurred which resulted in the death of 52 persons, when the Madras-Kanyakumari Express train collided with a goods train near Salem. I am very sorry to point out that the present accident and the last accident in May have happened under similar circumstances - that there is a train on the track and another train hits from behind. I

must say that today's newspaper report is alarming in the sense that it is reported that the linemen failed to notice that one train was stranded or is halting. Is it the way the Railways should manage the affairs? Is there not a system? Is it the failure of the system only?

As one Hon. Member has said, they have got a good machinery; there is a controller, sitting in his room watching every movement of every single train. What happened in the two railway accidents? The nation has right to know what is happening under similar circumstances. I feel that it has to be viewed very seriously. The Railway statistics show that the number of accidents are decreasing and the percentage of accidents is decreasing.

15.25hrs

That is no excuse for accidents. Every life is important and every human life is valuable to the bereaved and the next of the kin. In one case, it may be the loss of the father; in another house, it may be that of the mother or that of the children. The only hope is lost when the father of the family is no more or the surviving son who is the sole earning member of the family is lost. It is not merely the loss of life but the whole family is shattered. What is our answer to these poor families? We have to view this very seriously. Statistics show that in the last twenty years, not a single year has passed without two or three accidents every year, that too, major accidents with a loss of life of more than 50. Sir, Hon. Prime Minister has expressed his deep sense of sorrow, anguish and shock. We all share the agony of the Prime Minister. I am not going to speak about or answer the debate that is going on here; I am sure the Hon. Prime Minister and the Hon. Minister will answer to the debate. But under unusual circumstances, when the Railway Minister is away from the country undergoing a heart operation, as a temporary measure the Hon. Prime Minister has taken the charge of the Railways. But to say that he is the only one responsible for this tragedy is, I think, a little unfair. There are parliamentary traditions and norms when other parties ruled the country, also every year there were train accidents, I am not lessening the seriousness. I must say that we have to be accountable to the House and the whole nation. And that is the responsibility of the entire House.

Now, what is in front of us? Relief operations are in front of us. It has appeared in the Press and I am sure that Mr. Mallikarjun had rushed there. The honourable Chief Minister of UP also went there. Relief operations had been carried under the supervision of the Chairman of the Railway Board. The Army is there; we have to be thankful and commend the Army for their noble service that they do during peace time. Whenever calamities occur, they are there and do whatever is possible. But that, by itself, will not be a sufficient relief. Sir, the Hon. Prime Minister has also declared ex-gratia amount of Rs. 10,000, that is, double than the normal. I must say that it is not sufficient. Every case has to be studied independently.

We had a very bitter experience in Kerala in July, 1988. I mean the Peruman accident. My friend Mr. Chacko has mentioned about it. The Island Express plunged into a deep lake and 107 lives were lost....(Interruption).....You should understand the agony of the families who lost their members. It is adjacent to my constituency. At that time, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia was the Railway Minister; he rushed there and we were all there. Relief operations were on and I must say that the Central Government acted in a good way and all that was possible was done. But there was an inquiry which Mr. Chacko also has mentioned. It is really a disgrace that after one year, that report was submitted. It said that tornado-I heard this word for the first time meaning unusual cyclone-came and lifted the whole thing. So, the cyclone had lifted it. The ordinary man with little common sense will not understand this. So, I must say that an impartial inquiry must be conducted and the nation should be told under what circumstances this accident has occurred which has resulted in the loss of so many lives. That is the first thing that should be done because we have to avoid recurrence of such accidents in future. We cannot simply say that the Indian Railway is the largest in the World and that about ten million people are using the Railways everyday. It is not the question of number. Every human life is valuable and important. So, the real cause of the accident should be known and effective measures should be taken to avoid such accidents in future. Proper compensation should be given to families where their sole earning members are lost so that the such families may be compensated in a just manner.

Sir, our Hon. Member Shir Rawatji whom I respect very much, was quoting two lines from Shakespeare. I am sorry that he has quoted Shakespeare to blame the Treasury Benches. But when he was quoting those lines, some small verse also came to my memory.

MR. CHARMAN : There is a long list of speakers. Please conclude.

SHRI A. CHARLES : Sir, I am concluding.

Sir, when he was quoting those lines, a small verse came to my memory and they are :

'Words, speak little

Books, not much

Silence, something

But tears, much more'

This august House would now convey our grief with our tears and let us share the agony of the bereaved families and try to relieve them from their agony and pain.

[Translation]

SHRI BRISHIN PATEL (Siwan) : Mr. Chariman, Sir, before saying anything about the Firozabad train accident, I offer my condolence to the bereaved families of deceased.

A comprehensive discussion had taken place on the tragic train accident. And our honourable members had urged the Government to take a humanitarian view of the accident and they tried to make aware the Government of its moral responsibility. But what morality are we talking of. This Government lacks in humanity and morality. Regarding this I would like to make some points. The entire nation mourns this accident. As far as I can remember, while presenting the Supplementary Railway Budget in 1993, the Railways Ministry had asked for additional funds from the Finance Ministry for the purchasing a plane. At that time also I told the Railways Minister that while additional funds are sought for improving rail safety, to prevent accident, he sought funds to purchase a plane so that he could reach the accident site quickly. In this very House I had asked the Minister that the manner in which he was seeking funds makes one to apprehend that in future there would be large number of accidents? This was taken lightly by our colleagues, but the entire House is now concerned with that very question.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the House to an another aspect of this matter.

All our honourable members feel anxious to ascertain the total toll. Some figure them at 200, some at 500 whereas some other put them at 1000. No one is able to tell the correct number of casualties and fatalities. Why? Are we to think that by quoting a lower figure, the Government wants to lessen the severity of the accident, or by doing so the Government wants to evade compensation? I would like to remind the House that the House had passed the Bill on Passenger life Insurance. A list of such passangers is prepared as have reservation. And in case of an accident for such passangers compensation is paid. But for the unreserved passangers, no such list is prepared. In this House I had asked the Railway Minister, as to how he would pay compensation to such passangers? The Railways Minister had replied that such passangers should have the tickets with them and only then they would be paid compensation. I regret to say that the entire nation knows that when such an accident takes place even clothes of injured passangers is not left. What to talk of their tickets. To overcome this, I had suggested the Railway Ministry to get instruction issued to the booking clerks to ask those intending to travel in the unreserved compartment to give their details such as name; address and destination on a slip of paper while buying tickets. Such slips should be kept until the train completes its journey. In this way the Railways can have the names and addresses of those travelling without reservations.

The Railway Ministry had agreed to implement this suggestion. But the Railway Ministry has sought additional funds not for improving rail safety but for the purchase of a plane to reach the accident site quickly. How can we expect from such people to have any morality?

Unfortunately, I was travelling in Poorva Express along with Shri Nitish Kumar. The train reached Etawah at 6.15.

There we came to know of the Firozabad train accident. But we got no details. We were told that the Poorva Express would leave for Kanpur. From there another train would take us to Delhi. Our train reached Kanpur at 10 o'clock. Keeping in view severity of that accident, you would be surprised to know that instead of taking the Poorva Express to Lucknow, it was plied on a different track for Balamau Junction which is 97 Km from Kanpur. And you would be surprised to know that this distance was covered in six hours. The trains travelled at a speed of 15-16 Km. We were travelling in that train only. The branches of the trees along the tracks were scrapping against the coach continuously. We had heard of one big accident and were waiting for another accident. We feared that the train would get derailed but, however, no accident took place and we reached Delhi today at 3 a.m. Therefore, I want to say that if they want to prevent an accident, it can be prevented. If they have the will to do justice to the poor, they can do so. Without spending a single paisa. Today the total number of fatalities and casualties is being asked in the House. Had they any will power, the total number of those travelling in the unreserved compartments could have been ascertained without spending a single paisa. But I regret to say that it is foolish to expect a humanitarian gesture from such a flint hearted Government. I conclude by exhorting them that if they have any will power left in them, then they should strive to provide justice to the poor also and to prevent such accidents in future.

[English]

SHRI YAIMA SINGH YUMNAM (INNER MANIPUR) :
Sir, on my behalf and on behalf of my party I wish to pay my condolences to the families of those who were killed yesterday in the train accident at Firozabad. Through this House, I wish to express our deep sorrow and sympathy to the bereaved families. Our sympathies are also there for those who got injured in this accident and who are now struggling in the hospital for their lives. We pray for their speedy recovery.

It was a tragedy and this tragedy has taken away so many precious lives from their near and dear ones. We feel very sorry about it. It pains us deeply and we are not in a position to find words to express our sorrow. The number of accidents that had taken place in the recent past, as mentioned by many Hon. Members here, exposes the mismanagement and disorganisation of the whole of the machinery of the Ministry of Railways. A number of incidents have been referred here in this House. I need not repeat all of them.

I feel that this particular accident could have been avoided had timely action been taken either through the signals or through control room. This tragedy occurred since no such action was taken. So, I suggest that a judicial inquiry should be conducted or a Committee of this House should inquire into it and fix the responsibility. The Committee should find out who is directly responsible for this tragedy, whether the Prime Minister or the Minister,

who is now ailing, is responsible for this. If the Hon. Minister is responsible for this, he should take the moral responsibility and quit the post. Rabi Rayji just now pointed out how lamented Lal Bahadur Shastri taking the moral responsibility of a rail accident resigned from his post and how the late lamented Prime Minister Nehruji persuaded him to withdraw his resignation, but he refused to abide by him. It serves as a good precedent. This incident should inspire others also. The present Minister of Railways should take the responsibility and quit. I demand his resignation.

This will give solace and consolation to the people who are agitated in their minds.

Sir, one painful thing is the loss of confidence of the people in the journey by train. India is such a great country. As you know, the Railways unite the people from East to West and North to South. They integrate the people. This is such an important institution that it unites the people and integrates them. But now, the unfortunate thing is that the people have lost their confidence of safety in the journey by train, and that is a great loss. So the Government should consider it very seriously. So many accidents have occurred. They have been mentioned in this House by many Members and I need not repeat them. We must try to bring back the confidence of the people and make them feel that there is safety in travelling by train. Otherwise, the Railways will suffer very greatly, the country will suffer greatly, and the people will suffer very greatly.

Sir, I also feel that the rescue operations conducted by the State and Central Government machinery are not satisfactory to the people. We have learnt from many Hon. Members that they are not satisfactory and that they are not taken up on war-footing. Why was rescue operations not conducted even by the Army. These are the aspects that are to be looked into very seriously by the Government. I feel that the ex-gratia to be paid to the bereaved families and to the families of those people who were found injured and who are now in the hospitals must be paid honestly and promptly. Otherwise, the whole exercise will be meaningless. So, it may be taken very seriously.

Lastly, Sir, I would pray to God for early recovery of the injured persons and wish them speedy recovery. With these few words, I conclude.

DR. R. MALLU (NAGAR KURNOOL) : Respected Sir, I stand to express my deep concern over this tragic railway accident which has taken away hundreds of lives and caused injuries to several hundreds of people. Sir, immediately after the occurrence of the accident, our hon. Prime Minister who is holding the additional charge of Railways, has directed the Minister of State for Defence Shri Mallikarjun ji, who worked as Minister of State for Railways and had a lot of experience in Railways, to rush to the spot and take immediate remedial measures. The Chairman, Railway Board was also directed to go to the spot to take necessary steps immediately.

Sir, when we come to this biggest railway accident, our fear is that the Railways as a whole is losing the credibility. As our other friends were mentioning, the Railways are one of the organisations which is uniting the country by way of their very large network throughout the country. But, unfortunately, Sir, one after the other, in the recent past, a large number of accidents have taken place and this is one of the biggest railways accidents where more number of people have lost their lives.

It was reported that the Prime Minister should have gone there personally to supervise the rescue operations. But, as you know, if he goes there, the officers who are engaged in rescue operations, their attention will be diverted from their work to the Prime Minister's visit. This is was the main reason why the Prime Minister did not go to that place. But he has already expressed his deepest concern to the tragic loss of lives of many people. But, Sir, in this House, by cutting across party-lines, we have passed a Condolence Resolution saying that this Parliament is very much concerned about this accident. It is for the Parliament and for the Government to fix the responsibility as to who is responsible for this tragic accident.

As per the information, because of wrong signalling, this accident took place. While fixing the responsibility for this accident, let us not wholly fix the responsibility on the smallest person in the biggest organisations. But, you must match the link from the signal-man to the Member (Traffic), to the Advisor (Traffic) and then to the Chairman, Railway Board. These are the people who are continuously monitoring the traffic system. Whenever such accident takes place, we in the Parliament raise some objections. We discuss it and leave it. This is continuously going on. Now, I would request the Government, through you, Sir, to fix the responsibility from signal-man to the highest man in the Railway Board in order to see that some strong action is taken against the people, who are working under the Ministry of Railways, and who are giving scope for such accidents.

There are two types of errors. One is human and the second is technical error. But, in this case, we are given to understand that there is human error. If it is a human, it is more grievous than a technical error. I would say it is the failure of the system as such. There is something wrong in the administration or monitoring of the human affairs in the Railways. Anyway, whether it is a human error or a technical error, we have to fix the responsibility.

So, I would request the Government to fix the responsibility and take some strong action.

I am coming to compensation. I have to say a word about compensation. It is very easy to give compensation for the people who are travelling by reserved compartments as the reservation Chart is with the Railways. As far as the people who travelled by unreserved compartments are concerned, I would like to suggest that let them take out the names of the people who are in the

reserved compartments from the total the number of people died and they will be able to find out the number of people who were actually travelling by unreserved compartments. If it is done, even the people who were travelling by unreserved compartments can be given compensation. The Prime Minister has increased the compensation amount from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000. This benefit must go to the poor people who usually travel in unreserved compartments. Sir, our Prime Minister had recently take over the charge of the Ministry of Railways. There is a regular Railway Minister also but unfortunately he has gone to the U.K. for treatment of his heart problem. In this case, Sir, whatever steps were possible were taken by the Government, through the Minister or the Railway Board. The steps have been taken from all sources. I do not see any reason for the Prime Minister to resign on this particular incident. I fully agree with the accountability of the Government in Parliamentary democracy and Parliamentary system but accountability does not mean only resignation. It means to protect the interest of the people. But, at the same time, I would request, through you Sir, that the Government must be very serious and must appoint a Committee to see how best we can improve the signalling and other communication systems so that such type of accident do not recur in future.

SH. S.M. LALJAN BASHA (Guntur) : Mr. Chairman Sir, I do not want to go into what our other friends have spoken about Rail accident. I just want to say that we too are responsible for this kind of Rail accident. The Rail Reforms Committee, constituted in 1980-81, had observed that track circuit be built in the country and also that would involve an expenditure of Rs.350 crore. But this recommendation has not been implemented so far. Had it been implemented, then this accident would not have taken place. The recommendations made by the Committee for Rail passenger safety have also not been implemented. If this is the trend then this would not be completed even within next 75 years. We would have to face this kind of accidents often. About 82 percent of the Rail accidents we have met with so far, occur largely due to wrong handling. The Railway Board should have acquired informations in order to change it. There is a system of mobile communication. The guard and driver are connected to control room through this only and this helps in locating train within a distance of two kilometers. The possibility of Rail accidents could be largely reduced with the help of this system. Today, automatic warning system has been provided at the Gaya, Bombay and Mughalsarai station only. In foreign countries, disorders in trains are noticed with in 100 to 120 kilometres with the help of automatic warning system.

Hon. Shri Jaffer Shrief thinks of increasing speed of trains. I want to say that first of all we need to check our system for this. The track conversion from Ambala to Patiala along Jakhat Bhatinda section has been carried out, infact on papers only and virtually no work has been executed so far.

16.00 hrs.

You have recently seen that one man has got Rs. 80 lakhs as bribe, so many such bribes are taken in Railway but even then the work is not done, if it is done at all, it is done on papers only. There is a special train for GM of all the zonal Railways, irrespective of whether it is Central northern Railway, eastern Railway, that is used exclusively for him when he goes for track checking. This system of Railway is operating in the entire country. Whenever this train is on its mission, then other trains are sidetracked and this is allowed to pass through because they are going on an inspection visit like a king. They do not know during this visit as to what is the condition of the track? Therefore, we all should discuss it unitedly, but I am listening to you from morning itself that whosoever comes to speaks asks Hon. P.M. to resign, what Hon. Jaffer Sharief will do? We should first set all the systems of Railways in order. Today, we should ask as to how much money we would have to spend in bringing an automatic system, out of Rs. 350 crore sanctioned for Railways & safety in 1981 because this is neccessaary for us.

Today, we may contend ourselves by shouting on PM or Shri Jaffer Sharief but tomorrow there might come one more minister, so let us think above party line so/ that no accident takes place in future. Today, Railway is a big mission of our transport system, we have to think every possible way so that this could become better. The kind of Government that we have today may not be there tomorrow. So this issue may or may not get solved this way. The entire House must focus its attention on what is happening within the Railway Board and who are the corrupt officers in Railway and at the same time we must ensure railway safety and security. Only then, we can avert accidents today, we must not pass our time by just speaking only, rather we must spend whatever money is required for safety causes

I urge the Hon. Prime Minister who is incharge of railways tht he should allocate the amount/ reccommended by the Standing Committee in 1980-81. Four to five crore rupees do not suffice for safety measures. If this does not happen, then thousands and lakhs of people will go on dying. We do suffer in Railway, we do know the condition of tracks. Today, rail accidents keep taking place and so the Government has to make efforts for rectifying these. This is Government responsibility and they must discharge it.

With these words I conclude.

SH. SATYADEO SINGH (BALRAMPUR) : Mr. Chairman sir, from today moring itself this House has been paying candolences on the most horrible Rail accident in which innocent travelling citizens have been killed on a large scale and this House has discussed this accident by suspending all normal proceedings.

This kind of accidents seldom take place and draw attention of the entire country. Here all Hon. Members have discussed it. Many Hon. Members especially those

from treasury benches have been insisting time and again that we should discuss it by rising above-party line. They feel aggrieved that this is being discussed on party line and the resignation of ministers and Prime Minister is being talked about. They do not feel aggrieved on the fact that the accident has taken place because of system failure or some human reasons. Today, it has been published on front page of country wide newspapers that more than three hundred people have been killed in the accident but our Prime Minister maintains that the total is far less than the projected figure. The question is not of number, but of lives lost in it. The question is of the dependants of those who have been killed. The ultimate figure, may be 300, 350, 400 or 500, will appear later. The matter of surprise is that there is no information as to when the Railways officers reached to the spot. This will be investigated and investigation keeps going on. Several investigating committees have already been constituted and a committee from this House also must have gone there. The officers of Railways have gone there. Safety Commissioner has also gone there but despite all this ostentation, the corenence in toto is that the accident that has taken place, could have been averted. Our Charles sahib has gone there, he has narrated the accident. He has heard the name toronado for the first time and the wind that has blown has thrown the entire train in the lec. Here torando has blown out. We know who reach the accident spot. Our Chief Minister Ms. Mayawati of Uttar Pradesh Government reached there first. She has done a good work by going there. The way Our Rapid Action Force is being praised. When ever there is a natural or man made clamity, they are deployed there, but we feel sorry for this also.

It has been published in the newspapers that there were personnels of U.P. Police or R.P.F. who instead of removing dead bodies, saving the lives of survivors and making arrangements for shifting the injured to hospitals, were seen searching the pockets of the deceased and scratching their hands for ornaments like vultures. This is the image of India we are projecting before the World. Consequently, the competent authority evaded the responsibility by saying that thenceforward his men would not take part in rescue operations and they will stand aside. What action has been taken by the authorities against those persons. Who indulged in such indecent act?

Sir, through you, I would like to thank those voluntary organisations who whole heartedly served the cause of humanity in this accident. Interlocking system is a very old system being used in the Railway and moreover, it does not require any high technology. The cause of incident has been failure of inter-locking system. The train was standing in a section for two to two and half an hour and it had not crossed the next station. In this regard the next station should have been informed by previous station. The Guard is provided with telephone. He should have informed on telephone that thier train was standing on the intersection and another train should not be allowed on that section.

It is surprising how inter-locking system was changed to short circuiting system and green signal was given. Why did this accident occur? What to they mean by failure of interlocking system? The track section between Mughalsarai and Delhi is considered a very high speed track. Today, one of my friends was telling that there is a race for bringing in latest technology in the country. Hon. Manmohan Singh ji has been side-tracked. The achievements of the Hon. Prime Minister during the last four years are being eulogized. It is being acclaimed that we are progressing very fast in making this country a paradise but in this paradise, the people are being pushed to death.

Sir, there is a competition for purchasing rail engines from Brown Baveri or from Germany and every attempt is being made that it should not be manufactured in the country. Our Government is inviting foreign companies to invest in India but what is being done by the Railways to make interlocking system foolproof so as to save the lives of the people. Everyday, new high speed trains are being introduced. Traction Deiselisation Steam Engines are being phased out. The Government makes tall claims of increasing the facilities. It is a fact that Railway is the life-line of our country. Indian Railway is one of the biggest transport systems in the world. Everyday about 10-15 lakh people travel by these trains. Goods are also transported by these trains. What will hapen if such accidents are allowed to take place? Today, the common men has lost faith in the Railways but he is compelled to purchase ticket. People belonging to Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa come to Metropolitan cities like Delhi and in Punjab by purchasing tickets and sitting on the roof of the train to earn their livelihood.

A clever person can travel in 1st class without ticket in connivance with the railway staff but a poor cannot dare to travel without a ticket. He cannot even enter the Platform without ticket because everybody, right from a coolie to a constable and Railway employes have an eye on him. In case his name does not appear in the Reservation chart, he is denied the compensation. The Gjovernment should either make all the compartments reserved or make arrangements to provide compensation to the families of the deceased. The Railway Department has announced a compensation of Rs. 10000, which was earlier Rs. 5000. Members of Congress Party are praising themselves for this increase. The dead cannot be brought back to life but at least, his dependents should be given adequate compensation. There is no harm if the Government provides them at least one or two lakh rupees in the from of compensation. This country is not a business centre. It is a welfare State and the Railways is a system of this state. It the Railways acts in such an irresponsible manner and it becomes a cause for death, instead of carrying them safely from one place to another who will own the responsibility for that? Will not this House own the responsibility?....(Interruptions)

Maillikayurnji has lift the house....(Interruptions)

[English]

I Lodge a very strong protest.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please continue. He is coming.

[Translation]

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH : This is how the House is being regarded. It reflects the attitude of the House towards deceased. The Hon. Prime Minister has sent Shri Mallikarjun for taking part in this debate but he too has left. What does this mean? Mr. Chairman, Please call him.

MR. CHAIRMAN : He is coming meanwhile you continue.

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH : How can I continue? It is an act which lowers the dignity of the House. Time of the House is being wasted. No one is here to listen to us.

MR. CHAIRMAN : He is coming, you continue.

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH : Sir, I was saying that the charge of Railways is with Hon. Prime minister. He has several other responsibilities as well. A important debate on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir is going to be held in this house and charge the reef is also with the Hon. Prime Minister...(Interruptions) Hon. Prime Minister takes the responsibility of all such departments which are not functioning well. Railway Minister is not here. He has been presenting the railway budget for the last four years. Today he is in london. I pray to God for his early recovery. Now-a-days engins are being imported and Hon. Minister is also getting treated abroad. We cannot say much on this issue at present. Though Mr. Jafer Sharief is convalescing there yet he cannot escape the responsibility of railway accidents occured during his tenure of four years. What would happen to democracy and accountability of the Government if the Government itself would try to escape responsibility. In the message to the nation of 15th August. Hon. Prime Minister narrated the achievements of his Government but I would like to know whether another Prime Minister would come to own responsibility of those accidents, adversities and epidemic which gripped the country. I know that resignation of the railway minister would have been sought. The Congress Party considers it an intra-party matter but in fact it is not so. Hon. Prime Minister has tried to implement the Kamraj yojana and he was invited to works in the organisation. But he threatened that the people belonging to minority community would not vote in favour of Congress if he was removed from the Cabinet. Can any department works on the basis of such threatenings. The tendency of working inefficetly and escaping accountability would grow if Minister would behave in such a way. What is going to happen in this country. Sir, through you I would like to say that a message should be conveyed from this House that such action and threatenings would not be tolerated.

Today the situation in Railway department is such that employees and officials are creating disturbance.

None is ready to think of his responsibility. We are elected to this House and we have to give accounts of our mistakes to people after every five year, whether we have done something or not. But railway employees are not accountable to anybody. Today Railways have become far more corrupt than police department. There is no communication and co-ordination between officers and employees. There is lack of credibility. You can suspend a lineman or cabinman but I would like to know as to whether any general Manager or safety controller has been suspended so far. Whether any Officer of Railway Board has been suspended so far? What does their accountability means when you dare not take action against them? All the laws are for poor and lower employees. It is not for big wigs. Hon. Prime Minister should resign while owning the responsibility of this rail accident.

(Interruptions) He may not resign. (Interruptions) I cannot explain the definition of Ram rajya to my friend because he does indulge in politics. The Government may or may not hear to my appeals but it is also my moral responsibility that effective measures should be taken to save the lives of people.

Inquiry of this rail accident should not take a time of 6 or 7 months. This inquiry should be started with the Railway Board itself. All the guilty officers responsible for railway safety should be punished. Such things are monitored and controlled by Railway Board. It looks into their efficiency and punctuality. It was a super fast train. There is need to inquire as to what arrangements were made by Railway Board to thwart it and responsibility for the accident should be fixed. I feel that we all are wasting our time in this House if Adjournment Motion is not moved, debate is not conducted under Rule 184 and we are allowed to speak under Rule 193 even after such a ghastly accident. Later on Hon. Minister would reply to it and we would wait for another accident. It is a serious issue. The Houses has taken it seriously. All the proceeding of the House were stopped and the House expressed its concern over it. I pray that-

[English]

Let this debate come to a logical conclusion. Let there be no further accidents, whether it be due to human failure or due to technological failure.

[Translation]

With these words I thank you for allowing me to speak.

SHRIMATI LOVELY ANAND (Vaishali) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, firstly I pay my tributes to the persons killed in this rail accident and condolence to their bereaved family and friends.

The rail accident of Firozabad is quite painful, rocking and horrible. But who is responsible for it. Who is responsible for giving assurance of safety for lives and

property of the people. This accident deserves utmost condemnation. Who would guarantee the safety of common man. Why people do not feel safe while travelling by trains Railway accidents take place every now and then why the Government is not taking concrete preventive measures in this regard: Why such accidents occur again and again? The Government is maintaining silence over it.

Late Lal Bahadur Shastri had resigned from the office of the Railway Minister over a small rail accident. His example is with us. Now thousands of people have been killed in this accident and this Government is not tendering its resignation. I demand that this Government would own the moral responsibility of this accident and resign. Concrete steps should be taken to stop recurrence of such accidents. This accident should be inquired into by an high level committee. The bereaved families should be paid compensation and Hon. Prime Minister should himself go to console such families. Dead persons should be identified. Proper arrangement should be made for treatment of hurt. A team of doctors should be sent. Through you, I would like to say all this to the Government.

[English]

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (BANKURA) : Sir, the collision of trains at Ferozabad has gained a place in the record book of bloody rail accident. You would remember, Sir, that after the train accidents at Kalubathan, Salem and the one which took place at Orissa, within one month, this warning was given. But it remains unheeded. A similar accident took place in Kalubathan where the Jammu Tawi Express collided with a goods train which was stranded in a loop-line. In Salem also, both trains which were running in the opposite direction on the same line were collided. There would have been a serious accident, after three days, in the same place, that is, at Kalubathan, when Black Diamond Express was to be collided with a stranded goods train. Here in Ferozabad, a similar accident took place. How did the Prime Minister-cum-Railway Minister come to the conclusion that it was due to human failure? How did he come to that conclusion? Unless there has been a thorough inquiry to know whether there was a defect in the signalling system, whether the switch man or the cabin man who was on duty in the cabin had failed, whether there way any indication in the panel in the cabin, how can one come to such a conclusion? Is it because this is a patent word of the Railways? Whenever there is an accident, they come to the conclusion that it is due to the human failure.

Sir, what was our warning? We raised this issue earlier. We told you as to how the safety rules are being violated. The question has been raised in some newspaper. There is a mandatory provision; there is what is called last vehicle (LV). According to the provision, there should be a tail-light at the back of the last vehicle. I raised this particular issue, five or six years back. I can mention the name of the guard also who has retired very

recently. He pointed out that there was no tail-light and how he could board the guard's compartment without a tail-light because this is a safety provision. What happened because of pointing out of the violation of safety rules is that particular guard was suspended by the Railway authorities and after keeping him under suspension for a few months, his services were terminated. What was his fault? His fault was that of strict enforcement of the safety rules. Mr. M.L.N. Murthy is the General Secretary of the All-India Guards Council. Only one year back, after the Supreme Court's judgement and the Central Administrative Tribunal's judgment, he was taken back into service. His only fault was that he wanted the strict enforcement of the law, the safety rules.

There are three very important Committees. The Railway Reforms Committee is the recent one. In 1981, this Committee submitted its Report containing not one volume but 14 volumes concerning the various aspects of the railway operation. There was the Sikri Committee, the Wanchoo Committee and then the Kunzru Committee. All these Committees have recommended how the safety rules are to be observed. And in this particular case, one should be held responsible.

Shri Somnath Chatterjee referred to the track circuit system for passenger lines. This was recommended by the three Committees as also by the Railway Reforms Committee. In the last year's Budget, for this particular Farukhabad station in the Allahabad Division, a provision for track circuit for this particular station was included in what is called the Pink Book where work programmes are included, for the year 1994-95. Money was also provided but work was not taken up. Who is responsible for that? If the DRM of the Allahabad Division is responsible for this, he should be kept under suspension because when a railway employee can be kept under suspension just for asking for the enforcement of the safety rules, why the DRM or the Senior DRM who is responsible for this, should not be kept under suspension. When this particular work was included in the Pink Book, in the works programme, why was this work not taken up? Had this been taken up, probably the worst ever accident since Independence would not have taken place. Now nobody knows about the figure. Probably, the Prime Minister knows about the exact figure of 250. Shri Mallikarjun will intervene and inform the House that still the dead bodies are being recovered. Then how did the Prime Minister come to the conclusion that the figure is 250? Maybe it is more than 600 or 700 or 800. Until all the bodies are recovered nobody can say, not even Shri Mallikarjun, who went yesterday and came back, about the exact figure. He told us just privately that still the dead bodies were being recovered.

There are a number of instance. I have written a number of letters to the Railway Minister about how the safety rules are being violated and how the running staff, the Drivers and the Assistant Drivers are forced to work for more than 20 hours a day, although there was an agreement in 1973 with the All India Loco Running Staff

Association that the duty hours of the running staff would be only 10 hours. If any Driver or Assistant Driver refuses to work for more than 15 hours, not ten hours but more than 15 hours, he is penalised.

How could we expect the safety of the train and the safety of the passenger if the drivers are forced to work or compelled to work for more than 20 hours or 22 hours? One driver fainted in the locomotive. I have written number of letters. I can cite a number of examples about how the trains are allowed to move without minimum brake power. These are very important points. The accident is of serious nature. You allow me to say or to ventilate or to express our views.

Sir, what is required is the minimum brake power. In Railway Reforms Committee or in other Railway Accident Committee, they have recommended about what should be the minimum brake power. Even without minimum brake power, the trains are allowed to move and that is why such accidents took place.

Sir, near my constituency, in Asansol, only three years back when the train was allowed to move without minimum brake power, without headlight there was an accident. Six years back, 200 pilgrims were killed near Faizabad. Unless these safety norms and safety rules are observed, how can there be safety in railway operation?

Sir, only last year, there was a serious fire accident in Bombay Mail near Chakradarpur. The Railway Minister constituted a small Committee. I was the Chairman of that Committee. We submitted a report in the month of March. We took nearly two months to submit the report. We visited Chakradarpur and met the kith and kin of 47 or 48 victims. We went to the place where coaches are being maintained at Santragachi just to have an experience about how the recommendations of the Sikri Committee is being implemented. We made in-depth study. Shri Ram Naik, Dr. Kartikeswar Patra and others constituted the small Committee of five Members. We made 12 vital recommendations for the safety of railway operation. Do you know what has happened to those recommendations? Not a single recommendation was implemented. A recommendation where no funding was required was also not implemented. We recommended that in each compartment, in each sleeper coach in long distance trains, there should be a Coach Attendant because in that train, it would be surprising to know, in between Chakradarpur and Jharsuguda, no railway staff was provided. Only the driver at the front, at the locomotive and the Guard at the rear end were there. In between driver and Guard, no railway staff. We do not know what has happened to that enquiry? It is an independent body, but...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have already taken 15 minutes.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : I will take another five minutes and complete the speech, Sir.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Acharia ji, one's material will not be exhausted even if one chose to speak on the Railways the whole day.

[Translation]

[English]

(Interruption)

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : There was no staff...*(Interruptions)* The Prime Minister has come now. Please allow me to speak for at least five more minutes...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Just five minutes, Mr. Acharia.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : There was no railway staff between the engine and the brake van. There were only the driver, the assistant driver, the guard and the assistant guard in that Bombay Mail. The Railway Safety Commissioners, although generally almost in all cases are ex-railway officials, are not under the control of the Ministry of Railways, but are under the control of the Civil Aviation Ministry in order to have an impartial enquiry. When the Indian Railways Act of 1898 was amended and Joint Committee was constituted, the Joint Committee scrutinised the Bill. We made certain suggestions. What happens to the Report of the Railway Safety Commissioner? Nobody knows about the action taken on the recommendations. Our suggestion was, whenever Railway Safety Commissioner submitted a Report...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Acharia all these details are not required at this stage.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : This is very vital.

MR. CHAIRMAN : If you would continue with all these details, I think...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : There will be no end to it.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : This is very vital because unless the Reports of the Railway Safety Commissioner are laid on the Table of the House, how can we know what action has been taken on the recommendations? We do not know how the fire accident took place in S6 coach of Bombay Mail, what happened when the accident took place at Kalubathan, what were the causes, what was the reason for the accident, whether it was a human failure, whether it was a mechanical failure, whether it was a systemic failure, or whether it was a signalling failure. The Prime Minister-cum-Railway Minister must reply why Railways are still using overaged coaches. He cannot deny it. Thirty per cent of the passenger coaches are overaged. They have surpassed their normal life. You would be surprised! If you travel by local train you will see that there is no shutter. During rainy season, you will

not be able to save your body from the rain because there is no shutter. The window cannot be closed. So, you cannot save your body from the cold wind during winter. During summer, the fan will not work. The money is there, the fund is there. What is the priority of the Railways-gauge conversion or replacement of the overaged coaches or replacement or renewal of the entire tracks? What is the priority? I would like to know whether the priority is to import 6000 electric locomotives by spending Rs. 700 crore or spending Rs. 300 crore to provide track circuit in passenger lines. What is the priority? The Prime Minister should tell the House. Why was a lesson not taken even after such similar serious accidents having taken place over the last two or three months?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Okay, that is all right, thank you.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : That is why, Sir, we have demanded and very rightly demanded, as the Prime Minister has taken over the charge of the Railways, after when...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Acharia, I have tried to accommodate you, even though you were absent when I called your name. Now, you are not paying heed to me.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : No, Sir. My name was there. I am here since the beginning, right from 11 o'clock, just to speak. I was not getting the opportunity. I had to attend the Medical Centre; that was my priority. I went there and in the meantime, I think you called my name. How could I speak?

MR. CHAIRMAN : But now you have taken 20 minutes.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : I will take two more minutes and then I will finish.

MR. CHAIRMAN : After two minutes, again you will ask for five more minutes.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : The Prime Minister should own moral responsibility. He should have visited the accident spot. It is not far away from Delhi. If we go by helicopter, how much time would it take? It will take only half-an-hour.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Many people have asked this and you need not repeat it.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : I am not repeating.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You are repeating that.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : The Prime Minister should tender his resignation. He should own moral responsibility.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Thank you.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : I will also say that the inquiry by the Railway Safety Commissioner is not sufficient for such a serious and worst accident that has happened since Independence. As it is the worst accident since

Independence, this should be inquired into by a Supreme Court Judge and you can also constitute a House Committee. But there should be a judicial inquiry.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Mallikarjun.

SOME HON. MEMBERS : Sir, we have given our names.

MR. CHAIRMAN : He only wants to intervene.

16.43 hrs

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I shall not take much time of the House because the Prime Minister will be replying and the Hon. Members would like to hear him.

With a heavy heart, I join the Members in expressing the sentiments about the accident. As a Deputy Minister and a State Minister in Railways, I had seen quite a number of accidents. But in terms of human tragedy, I do not know, after how many decades, an accident where such a heavy death toll has taken place. I will just apprise as to what happened. Yesterday in the morning, the moment the PM came to know, he has directed me to immediately rush to the spot and I did went there.

Just to clear the things, I will make a few of the physical positions as to what has happened there. The sequence of events are such that the Kalanidhi Express,...(Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER : It is Kalindi Express and not Kalanidi Express.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Okay, thank you for the correction.

The Kalindi Express was not to stop at Firozabad. Therefore, it was cleared to move on the main line. There is a 'starter signal' and there is an 'advanced signal'. The Kalindi Express has crossed the 'starter signal' and it has come, to some extent, where incidentally and accidentally a buffalo came in and interfered with the track.

That is how it stopped there. So, it has stopped there. Our Hon. Members were thinking that this train was stopped there for one or one-and-a-half hours. It is not true. What happens is when a lot of express trains have been introduced, of course, at the same time, care has been taken to see that track is also made proper to run them. So, normally, the relative distance between two trains on the same track could not be more than ten minutes. Therefore, the concept of one hour or one-and-a-half hours or whatever it is, is not true.....(Interruptions)...If you have got to ask anything, you may do so after I finish my intervention.

There is a cabin called western cabin. Once this Kalindi Express passes through this advance signal, then the switch man from this cabin can give clearance to the other train following. Unfortunately, the switch man felt that it had passed and indication of the advance signal which is green still persisted in the cabin. I do not know for what reasons—whether psychological or whatever it is, I cannot attribute anything to it—he has not seen it. Then the east cabin man asked him whether the train has passed or not. He said that the train has passed. The Assistant Station Master also asked whether the train has passed or not. Then, they have cleared it because the Purushottam Express is also a through express, not going to stop there. So, since clearance has been given, it was at optimum speed. Normally, the distance between two signals is 800 metres and the formation of the train would be 300 or 350 metres or something like that. So, he has just followed it. Then, suddenly, collision took place. The tail end of the Kalindi Express and the head of the Purushottam Express collided. Because of that impact, due to the speed factor also, it capsized and the tragedy took place. So, here, prima facie, it indicated human error but still we will not conclude about human error unless and until the Safety Commissioner after advertising tomorrow or so for taking evidences of local people or the Railway people and others and then gives his findings. Immediately, the Railway Safety Commissioner of Northern Circle had also rushed to the spot because he always wants to see physical position of everything practically. So, yesterday, Member (Electrical), Member (Traffic) and Advisor (Signal) went around. Of course, I am not an expert; I am a layman. They have checked up all the preliminary things which are supposed to be in order. Sir, in this, I would like to emphasise on only one or two aspects where the agony of the Members and the people of the country are involved. What safety measures are the Railways taking to avoid the occurrence of such an accident?...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : It is all right...*(Interruptions)*... It is better if you allow me to speak for five minutes.

There are quite a number of safety measures which have been taken. Just now my friend—now again he has disappeared—was talking about the track circuiting system. In the Pink Book it is there and nobody has taken care of it. But at the station Ferozabad from one poling mark to another poling mark, track circuiting is completed and further work has to be sanctioned.

Anyway, it is not nearly track circuiting but I will just, for the information of the Members, give some of the major safety measures which the Railways have adopted.

Track maintenance on important routes is being done by the 'On Track Tie Tempers'. To eliminate joints in the track, rails are being welded into short-welded and long-welded panels.

For monitoring of track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording

cars, oscillograph cars and portable accelerometers have been pressed into service.

For detection of hidden flaws in the track, ultrasonic detectors have been introduced as a result of that, we will be able to know where the flaw is lying in the track and that will be removed and replaced.

16.52 hrs

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Sir, another Major thing that we were to make was renewal of the tracks. Renewal also has been done and necessary steps are being taken for training all the safety staff. All the safety staff connected are being given refresher courses. Unfortunately or fortunately, the present switchman went through the refresher course and vision test with a certificate. On the 16th only he has joined. But anyway, all that will be established by the Railway Safety Commissioner.

So far as the accidents are concerned—just within three-four minutes I will mention them—in 1981-82 there were 812 accidents are not a major concern. What I am trying to explain to this august House is, what attempts are being made by the Railway Administration in bringing down the accidents. For example, last year during 1994-95 from April to July there were 14 collisions and this year for the same period from April to July there were seven collisions. About the derailments, last year for the same period there were 27 derailments and this year it was 21. When we come to the index number per million per kilometre tonne, it was 5.5 accidents during 1981-82. It has come down to 0.7 accidents now. It does not mean that the Railway administration should not take proper care. The Administration must take care.

In the morning itself, the Hon. Prime Minister has directed the Railway Board Members and the Chairman that proper attention should be given to the safety. For example, there are about 23,000 unmanned level crossings where the Railways was taking measures so long.

So, recently, the Railway administration has taken a decision that in a phased manner they would make arrangements for manning the unmanned level crossings. When I was the Deputy Minister for Railways, I was very particular about this, there was the Problem of recurring expenditure and investment. So, even I thought, why not we involve the State Governments in this? This is because these level-crossings connect mostly the villages. So, when accidents take place in these unmanned level crossings, the loss of lives is colossal. Now, they have taken a decision to this effect and about 300 unmanned level crossings are now manned.

MAJ.GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI: Here, we are not talking about the unmanned level crossings. We are talking about one train hitting another train which is repeatedly happening and which ought not happen. We are not talking about other failures...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : I have already explained about it. There is nothing more to explain about this...(interruptions) The Hon. Members have asked about the measures and precautions that are proposed to be taken to avoid the recurrence of such accidents in future...(Interruptions)

MAJ.GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI : According to the data which you are giving, we should congratulate...(Interruptions)

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Have patience to hear me...(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : Sir, I had asked the Hon. Minister as to how long did Kalindi Express remain stationary there? (Interruptions)

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : I may tell you that there is not more than 10 minutes time between the passage of two trains. Then, how can it remain stationary for one and a half hours?

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : When the train did not reach the next station in 10 minute, then why was not this conveyed to the former station?...(Interruptions)

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Had it crossed the advance signal, even then it could not have reached next station in time.

[English]

Sir, I do not want to enter into a dialogue...(Interruptions) All necessary steps have been taken. In the morning itself, the Prime Minister even gone to the extent of advising the Railway Board that some passengers travel in the unreserved coaches also, and in case of accidents, the addresses of such victims are not found—to find a way so that the records of the passengers travelling in the unserved coaches are maintained. The Railway Board would examine this proposal.

With these few words, I conclude.

MAJ.GEN.(RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI : What is the latest position in regard to the number of deaths?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Sir, the latest position is : Dead-260, injured-218.

MAJ.GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHNDRA KHANDURI : At what time?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : This news came in at about 4 o'clock or so. The rescue operations are almost going to be completed and the line is going to be opened...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : There should be some procedure.

MAJ.GEN.(RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI : Sir, in the morning, one Hon. Member was talking about the medical facilities being provided to the victims. I would like to know about the medical facilities and also about the identification of the dead and their disposal. There has been a tremendous amount of doubt and unhappiness over these two issues.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : So far as medical aid is concerned, the Railways have made a arrangements which the local hospitals. They have sent their ambulances. I am very thankful to the people of that city who have come forward and rendered a lot of assistance in the rescue operations.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI: What about the identification of the dead and their disposal?

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Sir, normally this is a very problematic thing. Generally, post-mortem is done. But I have asked them to take the clearance from the State Government and the police to register it as a railway accident case. It would help them, otherwise post-mortem would be a big problem. For the purpose of identification, photographs in both black and white and coloured would be taken by the State Government and the Railways and accordingly we would try to identify them.

17.00 hrs.

SHRI E. AHAMED (MANJERI) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I share..

MR. SPEAKER : Are you making a speech or asking a question?

SHRI E.AHAMED : Sir, my speech is not over only the question-answer session is over. I may be permitted to say a few words.

I express my deep sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of those who have been killed in this national tragedy.

MR. SPEAKER : That you should have said in the speech itself.

SHRI E. AHAMED : The Members have expressed their deep concern about the persons who got injured in this accident and who are fighting for their lives. The Hon. Minister has mentioned certain actions which he has taken. I wish the Government to take these measures on a war-footing. I may take this opportunity to suggest to the Hon. Prime Minister to constitute a sub-Committee of his Council of Ministers for the crisis-management as that will not only give a sense of relief to the family members of those who have been killed or injured but also to the people at large as to how seriously the Government view this tragedy. There are certain lapses.

MR. SPEAKER : What is it that you want to ask? Let us understand that we have given enough time for the

discussion. I thought that you are going to ask for some small clarification. It is becoming a regular long speech.

SHRI E. AHAMED : I am not going to make any long speech. I have already made one suggestion to the Hon. Prime Minister.

The Railways are not taking that much interest in the enforcement of safety rules as other services, like the Indian Airlines, are taking. The Railways have the largest network in the country. The railway services are extended up to a distance of 62,000 kms. with 130 lakh passengers travelling every day. So, it is not an easy thing for the Railways and we all appreciate it. Still, with regard to the safety rules, the Railways should be much more vigilant. If an aircraft does not go to the airport...

MR. SPEAKER : Please bear in mind that we have given enough time for it. We have the other business to transact. We have the Kashmir issue to be discussed. Budget is to be passed and then ordinances are to be passed. You may please cooperate by just asking a clarification.

SHRI E. AHAMED : I do appreciate what the Hon. Chair has instructed me. I am here to cooperate with you, Sir. All the Members were making speeches but I do not want to make a speech. The only thing that I would like to ask is, whether the Government has made any arrangement for the supply of blood and other essential things, which many Hon. Members have already mentioned, so as to save the lives of those who are struggling for their lives in the hospital.

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, you may please note down all the points and reply to all of them in the end.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, my query has not been replied to. I wanted to know whether compensation will be paid only to those passengers whose names were registered in the reservation list? Barring two bogies, all other bogies attached to Kalindi Express are general bogies. General bogies are also attached to Purshottam Express in which the passengers travel on current tickets but their names are not enlisted in the reservation list. What is the Government going to do about giving compensation to such passenger?

Secondly, the dead bodies of the deceased, some of whom belonged to Puri and some to Bhuvneshwar, have to be transported to far off areas. I would like to know what arrangements are being made to ensure that the dead bodies of the deceased are taken to their families respectfully?

[English]

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Chittorgarh) : Sir, I seek two clarifications. The Hon. Minister of State has very kindly explained to us all the various things that the Government

and the Railways have done to improve safety standards. I am not for a moment disputing that this has not been done. My first query is; despite all these things, if such a major tragedy has taken place, what is your assessment of the steps that you had yourselves taken?

Secondly, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, when initiating the discussion, had listed what he called his worries. One worry that he listed was that outside of the factual position of the case, outside of the numerous times that these accidents had taken place, and indeed flowing from both these is the aspect of Ministerial responsibility, the Government's responsibility. No one from the Treasury Benches, indeed the Minister of State even now in his intervention has not benefited us with his views on this very important aspect. Central to today's discussion about this very grim tragedy is "who is answerable for this from the Government?" Does the Minister have any responsibility for what has happened, or not happened? The Government must share its views with us.

[Translation]

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH (Balrampur) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I would like to raise one question. Just now, the Hon. Minister said that the length of train is usually 300-350 meters and the distance between two outer signals is 800 meters. There is about 10 minutes gap between the passage of two trains. The driver, the guard and the cabinman of the train must be aware of these basic information. It is said that Superfast train was coming from behind whereas the former train was stationary at some distance ahead. In such a situation, what safety measures were taken? If an accident had taken place in between this time gap... (Interruptions) Many reasons are been given here and it has been said that a blue bull was mowed down which caused the accident. What safety measures would have been adopted by the Railways, had the train got derailed because 10 minutes time is very less.

DR. S.P. YADAV (Sambhal) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, does the Government take any follow up action on the suggestions given here. The Railway Budget is also discussed here. Just now, the Hon. Minister said about the unmanned level crossing... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : You are stretching it too far. That should be discussed at the time of Railway Budget.

[English]

Otherwise, you cannot cover the Railways, Airways, Waterways ..

[Translation]

DR. S.P. YADAV : Three people had dies and three were injured in an accident on an unmanned level crossing in my constituency. Despite this mishap, no staff was deputed there.

SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the injured have probably been admitted to the hospital nearest to the accident site and the family members of the victims of an accident are thronging the site to identify the dead and attend to the injured. Is the Government making any temporary arrangements for their lodging and supply of drinking water etc? What arrangements are being made for the children who have been rendered orphans and for the women who are left with nobody to look after them?

Secondly, many times the Railway Reforms Committee gave the suggestion that zonal offices be set up at Jabalpur and Allahabad. There is a heavy workload in Allahabad office. Does the Government intend to implement the suggestion given by the Reforms Committee or the Standing Committee? What is the Government doing to implement them and to go in for work distribution in the real sense of the word?

[English]

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : There was one point that was raised in the House and it is left unclarified. The doubt raised was that the Purushottam Express was meant to stop at Kanpur Station for one hour but because of VIP movement in some other train the schedule was changed. Is it a fact? This was raised in the House and so should be clarified.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Sir, so far as the...

MR. SPEAKER : You have very ably replied. I would expect you to reply only to the questions.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Yes, Sir, I do not want to waste the time of the House. So far as the unreserved coaches are concerned, I have already informed the House that in the morning the Prime Minister has directed about how to proceed in future. About how to take the bodies, Sir, once they are identified we will certainly make arrangements...

[Translation]

SHRI SHARAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon. Railway Minister is present here.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : He is going to reply.

[Translation]

SHRI SHARAD YADAV : I think that he has no right to give the reply. The Hon. Prime Minister is present here to give reply to this debate.

MR. SPEAKER : He is intervening

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Sir, so far as identification of bodies is concerned, once they are identified, we will make all arrangements to see that they reach their families or their places.

So far as the question of looking after the relatives is concerned.....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, my one question is yet to be replied to

MR. SPEAKER : I will not allow you to speak now. Let him conclude first.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : So far a Hon. Shrimati Dubey's question is concerned, I would like to mention that we have extended facilities to take the relatives and family members to the spot for identifying the bodies. Arrangements will be made for that also.

So far as the question of fixing the responsibility is concerned, as was mentioned by Shri Jaswant Singh, I would like to mention that as a Government, we take the collective responsibility; I take the responsibility. When I take the responsibility, it becomes a moral obligation on me to correct wherever the mistake are. This is what I have to say.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : I had asked that there was a list of those passengers who were in reservation compartment.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : They have a method.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : He did not tell about that. He merely mentioned the general bogies.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Probably, you will get the reply from the Prime Minister himself.

It seems Shri Sharad Yadav wants to ask something.

[Translation]

SHRI SHARAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it takes three hours to reach there and throughout the day, Members have expressed their individual apprehensions in the House about the arrangements there. It will be better if a team of some Members of this House is sent there to oversee the arrangements. Moreover, it will activate the rescue arrangements and encouraging message will go from this House down to the people of the country.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHAUDHURY (Katwa) : It is alright. I support it.

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO) : Sir, right now, four Ministers of the Government of India

are camping there. They have gone to the site. They have gone to the hospitals. They are still there and we are in almost continuous touch with them. Whatever has been raised in the House; whatever information has been asked for, we have asked for it and this kind of continuous monitoring is going on. So, it is an evolving situation. It is very difficult to say at what point of time what is happening and what is not happening there.

So far as I am concerned, Sir, wherever and whenever accidents have taken place, whether it is this or any other accident, I have avoided rushing there immediately, deliberately because my going there, as I have seen on one or two occasions, will only come in the way of relief work immediately undertaken by those people there. My visit somehow comes in the way of efficient handling of the situation on the spot. This is human nature. Everybody would like to see if the Prime Minister comes there, he would like to attend to him rather than those who are suffering there. That is why I have avoided. I did not even lose a few minutes. The moment I came to know, I told Mr. Mallikarjun - who has got some background of the Railways, who has worked in the Railways - has done some good work - this is also known - "You know the ropes, please go and find out, take the Railway Board people with you and report to me". So, I am getting the reports.

Regarding safety now, I myself have not handled Railways. So I do not know the intricacies of the working of the Railways except as a passenger. As everyone knows, I also know. But apart from that I have not handled it. So, I am also having to learn a few things. I had two-three meetings already with the Railway Board. I had asked questions, perhaps, to which I did not know the answer. Now, the question just raised about is the identification and how the compensation is to be paid in respect of a person who is dead.

Now we know this. I have had some experience of old very big accident when I was in the State of Andhra Pradesh. People may remember that there was a very bad accident in 1953, where more than 600 bodies were recovered from a river on which the bridge collapsed because of heavy rains. Now, since then, I know that the claims and the settlement of claims take a very long time. Sometimes it takes two years, three years and it is a heart-breaking kind of exercise. People came to me; at that time we are MLAs; we were in the party and we had to go to the Claims Commissioner, whatever he was called, in Secunderabad. So, we have this experience for a fairly long time. I understand it. This morning, the Chairman of the Railway Board told me that was now a thing of the past. They have had now Tribunals, Claims Tribunals, 19 of them are working all over the country. And whenever a claim is made, normally the time taken now is about six months. This is what I have been told.
... (Interruptions)

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Six months !

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : Only six months, earlier it was two-and-half years, three years. This is the point, Sir. Nobody wants any delay; nobody wants an accident; nobody wants any human life to be lost. If statistics are given, suddenly the Members get angry. If statistics are not given, wild kind of number are quoted here. The number of 1500 was quoted in this House. What do you want me to say? I gave you number as I had it, at that time it was 251. Now at this time it has risen to 260. But if a Member says with great authenticity that it is 1500, then where do we end? Is it a great virtue to say that more people have died? Who wants anyone to die? Does the Government want anyone to die? An accident, is an accident, you have to take it as an accident.

Prima facie it is said that it could be or it may be a human error. It may not be; it could be mechanical; it could be something else. That will come only after the inquiry. I am also not ruling out a judicial inquiry it that becomes necessary. We have had judicial inquiries in such cases in the past. So I am not ruling that out but there is an officer, a very highly placed official, who has all the expertise at his command, who goes into these things and while the inquiry is on, if it is found that a judicial inquiry is necessary—there are certain responsibilities, legal responsibilities to be fixed, etc.—then we will have judicial inquiry. We have no objection for that. This is what I would like to tell the Hon. Members, Sir.

Something about the railway recommendations of the Railway Safety Committee were mentioned. It is very difficult when facts are ignored to this extent. The Hon. Members have pointed out that measures to increase safety of train operations have not been taken and the recommendation of the Safety Committee have not been implemented. I would like to point out that the Rail accident Inquiry Committee of 1978 contained 450 recommendations for implementations. Out of these, the Railways have already implemented 449. the remaining recommendation, the single solitary recommendation relates to research and development. Now there is nothing like finality in that. It is an-going programme, which is a continuing activity. The Kunzru Committee in 1961 recommended track circuiting. This work, as Shri mallikarjun told the house, is progressing each year and subject to availability of funds the work is being done. This is the position. So, in the matter of safety, if it is said, if it is charged, if it is accused that it is being ignored altogether, I would like to differ. But if it is said that much more is needed, I agree, Sir, much more is needed.

For instance this very morning when I was talking to the Railway Board, I was told, 'it is easier to find out the reserved persons'. On the unreserved side, it is very difficult to identify who came from where, we do not know. Now this may have a real difficulty 10 years back or five years back. But I do not think it should be a difficulty now when computerization and other facilities are available. At least an attempt should be made to see that as far as possible, even in the unreserved quota, unreserved

section, any traveller, any passenger coming into an Express train, at least, his name is noted down. It should not be difficult. His address is noted down.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : This is not done always. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : This is what I am saying. I have instructed them if this can be immediately taken up.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : I may tell the Hon. Prime Minister that computerised tickets are not given in Farrukhabad, through which the Kalindi Express passes.

[English]

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : I all the stations, this computerised reservation system is not there.

[Translation]

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : The hand written tickets are available there.

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : These are not available in villages. Only the printed tickets which are later stamped, are available. The officers have given you wrong information....*(Interruption)*.

MR. SPEAKER : You should understand his point. He is saying that instructions can be given to do so.

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : I would like to know, about those passengers who travelled without a reservation ticket?

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : What is being done now? The other things can be taken care of later on.....*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : Sir, he has given up already in advance that it cannot be done. I do not want to give it up. That is the only difference. What can I do Sir? It is a tragedy. Nobody denies this. Nobody denies that much more needs to be done in many, many respects in the working of the Railways and I have also pleaded my own very limited knowledge, in fact, bordering on ignorance about the Railways. We will take up these matters as raised by the Members one by one and we will see if at the Prime Minister's level, there is any policy decision to be taken, money decision to be taken, some other decision to be taken, we will certainly do that.

One point which has been troubling me is not about one-and-a-half hours as Atalji said. If it has been one-and-a-half hours, that would be erring on one side. Now I am told that the time-lag between the two Express Trains was nine minutes on the occasion of this accident. This is what worries me. Is it possible that in drawing up the time-table for the sake of passenger trains or Express trains coming in the morning, reaching Delhi in the

morning, the gap between the trains was deliberately made shorter? Is it possible during the day time it was longer? Is it possible that this density of running of the trains needs to be looked into once again, at least, on very, very busy tracks like this? These are the matters into which we have to go. They suggest themselves very easily but when one goes into the facts of this case, there may be many more which will come out after the enquiry. The measures already taken about track, the welding and all those things have been already related by Mr. Mallikarjun. I have seen it. We have all seen in Europe. For instance, the rail is not welded at all. For miles and miles, it is only one piece. Now that kind of rails we do not have here. So that is necessary. So whatever consequent steps are to be taken, they are being taken. While fast trains are being introduced, it is not correct to say that corresponding safety measures and corresponding improvements in the track, etc., are not at all being made. Maybe, more are needed.*(Interruptions)*

I can give you all the details. Other safety measures adopted over the years related to track maintenance on important routes.

AN HON. MEMBER : Even the Prime Minister does not know.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : Yes, I do not know. That is why I am only giving you what I have received. I have no doubt about that. I stick to that because that is a fact. I have not run the Railway Ministry but I can only give you the information which I have.

I can only give you the information that I have. All this can be verified. This can be verified. *(Interruptions)*

I do not know what to do now.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Mr. Prime Minister, you are taking the stance that it is not true that nothing has been done. The point is whether everything that should have been done has been done.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : I am giving the House certain facts given to me. If any of these facts is found wrong, some heads are going to roll. That is all.

AN HON. MEMBER : Are you satisfied?

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : There is no question of satisfaction. Nobody satisfied with his own life and his own performance. I do not know if there is any person so complacent as to say that he is satisfied.

[Interruptions]

MR. SPEAKER : It cannot be done like this. Only the Prime Minister's statement will go on record.

[Interruptions]

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : Sir, if any more information is wanted,...

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : We are given to understand that one Central Minister was moving in a different train. That is why the train was delayed.

MR. SPEAKER : I have said that only the Prime Minister's speech will go on record.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : This question was raised and the Prime Minister is not replying to that question. That is why the accident took place. That is the basic reason. Let the Prime Minister clarify the position.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : I do not know whether it is a fact that a Central Minister was moving in a train.
[Interruptions]

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : The gape between Kalindi Express and Purushottam Express was not nine minutes.

MR. SPEAKER : It is a fact which has to be inquired into.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : The gap of nine minutes was not there. The gap was taken away because of the movement of the Minister. Why is this fact being suppressed? Why was Purushottam Express detained at Kanpur?

MR. SPEAKER : Let it be found out. If the accident was outside, let us not have an accident at this moment here. Every moment you should not hop up and ask question.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : I am only asking simple questions. Was there a delay and why was the train delayed?

MR. SPEAKER : You should understand that this is not the method of asking questions.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : I have a categorical answer here to help the House and the Hon. Member. It is not correct that the Purushottam Express was held up for any one, any Minister anywhere.*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : Why was it held up?

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : There can be hundred reasons. My God! what an ignorance!*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I think accidents will take place if you do not understand the things quickly.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : This is the position. We would like, if necessary, to give facts again, the latest facts. Tomorrow, if necessary, if I have your permission, I will ask Shri Mallikarjun to find out what is happening from day to day and report to the House; because this is something in which we are all equally concerned. This is all I could say. All the other facts have come. If there is anything more to be collected and given by way of information to the House, we are prepared to do it.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, the Prime Minister has been humble enough to admit that he does

not know anything about the functioning of the Railways. We appreciate that. This was an occasion obviously to raise questions as to what safety measures are taken. We know that by a debate we cannot do away with this accident or save human lives which have been lost already. Therefore, at least the country should be satisfied, made to satisfy, that these are the steps which have been taken or are being taken. Merely saying that every recommendation is being followed will not do. Then are all those recommendations useless recommendations? If, even after every recommendation was followed the accidents are taking place, that is too much. This is the difficulty.

I can understand the Hon. Prime Minister does not know. But he has not been briefed on this also. Therefore, is it the God who will save the people of this country?

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : Shri Mallikarjun has given the steps already taken. I did not want to repeat. I did not want to repeat what he had said about sophisticated track, fault detecting equipment, oscillograph, etc., ultrasonic rail testing, signalling equipment, improved technology.

Now, someone has said..*(Interruptions)* Please let me have my say.

Sir, it was stated that allocation on signalling telecom works is not adequate. Now I am telling the House in all humility that it has been actually increased from Rs. 135 crores in 1991 to Rs. 198 crores this year. How can they say that it has gone down? How can they say that it is not cared for? This is the kind of baseless thing that is coming.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : You are only reading out the figures. I read out the Government figures to show that even the amount sanctioned has not been spent. The increase of Rs. 60 crores is nothing compared to the escalation of prices between 1991 and 1995.

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO : Sir, I have given the figures that I have.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : You said that you have been very fair and that whatever money was available had been spent. But what was the money available? Does it commensurate with the relief? On that, there is no enquiry, Mr. Prime Minister. I have the figures of the last three years as to how much money has been provided to this sector.*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : In fact, this kind of discussion should take place when the Railway Budget comes up for discussion. But we ask for lines to our constituency.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to ask only one simple question. Is it a fact that track circuit for the passenger line in that particular station was sanctioned last year and was included in the works programme, but the work was not taken up? If so, why was it not taken up? If it had been taken up, this accident would not have taken place.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Sir, while replying I have looked towards the seat of the Hon. Member. But he had gone out. I had told that in this station, track circuiting has taken place between one poling mark and another poling mark.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : That has been pointed out as not adequate. Do not take the House for a ride; human lives are involved in this.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : Do not say that I am not concerned about the human lives. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I think the Hon. Members were very concerned and they did raise some very important points. I think the Government has tried to reply to all those important points. If there are other important points, they can also be conveyed to the Government and appropriate necessary action can be taken. At this point of time, our concern is that those who have suffered should get the relief as quickly as possible. On your behalf and on behalf of all of us here, I think, we can decide on behalf of the Government that the relief will be given as expeditiously as is possible.

You have done your duty. The Government, I think, would do its duty and now please let us go to the next item, because there are many other items which we have to take up.

In the meeting again we have decided that there is one small Bill which can be taken up. That Bill seeks to amend the Indian Statistical Institute Act. In that Bill, instead of only Statistice we are going to consider Mathematics and other issues. That is the only amendment required. If we complete this today, tomorrow we can take up Kashmir Budget for discussion and then we can go to other items. Please cooperate on this and after that we can adjourn.

I think you have done your duty extremely well and I have no doubt that the Government will stretch its capacity and its ability to help the people and the help will be given expeditiously. All that can be done and even if some help can be given by going out of the way, it will be given.

17.35 hrs.

INDIAN STATISTICAL INSTITUTE (AMENDMENT) BILL
- contd.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Now, we shall take up further discussion on the Indian Statistical Institute (Amendment) Bill, 1995. Bhargavaji would you like to speak on this. Let us complete please. It is a very very technical Bill. You appear to be the last speaker. You can have your say very briefly.

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA (Jaipur) : Mr. Speaker,

Sir, this is a small Bill. In section 4 of Indian Statistical Institute Act, certain powers had been conferred on the Institute to conduct the examination and give away the Degrees or Diplomas. This institute now want to introduce new degree courses in Mathematics, Quantitative Economics and Computer Science from this academic session i.e. from July, 1995. This Bill has been brought here for this purpose only. I welcome the Bill but I would like to submit that today Indian Statistical Institute is passing through a critical phase. This is a renowned institute in the country but its financial position is very precarious today. The budget of this institute is being reduced. The Central Government has also reduced the funds meant for purchasing journals etc. for the National Library of this Institute. My humble submission is that their should not be any restriction on purchasing journals.....*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : These things should be avoided so that you may have time to speak on the main issue.

SHRI GRIDHARI LAL BHARGAVA : 75 percent of its budget goes in salaries and allowances of the staff. Therefore, the Central Government should increase its budget, revamp the system, convert the science units in big departments and install powerful computers there so that this institute could function efficiently.

I hope that the Hon. Minister will ponder over all these points and include all in the Bill.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI GIRIDHAR GAMANGO) : Sir, I am thankful to the Hon. Members for supporting this Bill. It is a simple Bill. Here we propose to add three subjects only for one reason that when the Institute was awarding degrees for computer science — though the degrees were genuine — some doubt were expressed by the employees about their genuineness. This amendment is being made to remove those doubts.

Along with that, we are proposing to make mathematics as part of statistics. Though mathematics is linked with statistics yet separately we are proposing that mathematics may be treated as one of the subjects.

Another subject which we are going to add is the computer science which is already there.

Some doubts were expressed by the Hon. Members regarding the name of the Institute. One Hon. Member was asking that while amending Section 4 by adding mathematics, computer science and two or three other subjects, whether we are going to change the name of the institute or not. We are not changing the name. It will remain the same, viz. The Indian Statistical Institute. But these subjects will be added and we are going to start them from next year semester.