

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I think we need not spread out too far.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA : Why does he not refuse assistance from the USA which has been doing so much of mischief ?

SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR : I shall now make a reference to one of the remarks made by my hon. friend opposite. He was making fuss about this problem and deprecating that our policy had failed and all that. He has said that because of this new treaty, we have lost our freedom. I must repudiate that criticism with all the emphasis at my command, because if he has understood the treaty, leaving aside his allergy...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : That discussion will come up tomorrow.

SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR : But that remark of his needs to be rebutted here and how.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : We are going to discuss it probably for the whole of tomorrow.

SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR : I shall conclude in half a minute

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA : Is he the authentic exponent of the treaty ?

SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR : I am not elaborating on that. But I shall merely say that because of this, India will not be losing her freedom. On the contrary, India will be a stronger bastion of peace in this part of the world and aggression or potential aggression from aggressors will be deterred and they will be deterred from executing their designs. Other points were also raised by other Members, but they did not devote much of their attention to ma-

ters concerning relief and other aspects. Only some points were made by the hon. Member from Tripura, and I have replied to him already.

The other aspects of the case were covered by my colleague.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The question is :

“That the Bill be passed.”

The motion was adopted.

15.36 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE : ACCIDENTS ON THE EASTERN RAILWAY

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contai) : This discussion is about two recent tragic accidents in the Sealdah Division of Calcutta in the first of which 11 persons lost their lives and in the second, 7 persons were killed. I will not deal with the details, but I would like to say at the outset that when there is a discussion under rule 193, for the discussion to be fruitful, we should know the results of the preliminary inquiries held into these accidents. In the case of the first accident, two trains collided against each other, in the second, into a train that was standing, another train telescoped from behind. There is something peculiar and unnatural in this; something must have gone wrong either with the driver or the pointsmen or the people dealing with the signals or there must have been wire-cutting and interference with transmission of message. One cannot have a fruitful discussion without knowing these details except to wail for those who fell victims to these two tragedies.

Therefore, I would ask the Railway Minister to enlighten the House as to what are the real causes of these accidents and whether they have held an inquiry into these.

Then I want to know whether adequate compensation has been paid to the victims, including the railway employees. What is the basis of calculation of the quantum of compensation.

15.37 hrs.

[SHRI K. N. TIWARY in the Chair]

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय (मुरेना) :
सभापति महोदय, मेरा व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है। सदन में गणपूर्ति नहीं है।

MR. CHAIRMAN : The bell is being rung — — Now there is quorum. He may continue.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Such accidents have happened in the past and many more are likely to occur in the future particularly in the West Bengal area. In the present disturbed situation in West Bengal, where the law and order situation is very difficult, more such accidents are likely to happen. Therefore, the Railway Minister should clearly take the House into confidence about the causes of such accidents in the past and the causes that require to be removed in the future to avoid recurrence of such accidents.

There are reports in the press that copper wires were cut and stolen by thieves, that some saboteurs are active in that region ; then there is the influx of refugees and also infiltration of many saboteurs from the other side. In view of these, many more accidents are feared in that area. Therefore, the Minister should take very positive steps immediately.

He should find out what are the probable causes and what may be the other probable causes for such railway accidents in West Bengal. and that is absolutely necessary. I would suggest that a Committee of Members of Parliament may also be sent there to investigate into the causes, but it should be done within a short spell of time; it should not take more than 15 days, and within 15 days the investigations should be completed, and a report submitted. Otherwise, it will continue indefinitely and it would be meaningless if the investigations continue indefinitely.

Now, there was a report in the press that the Railway Minister is going to recruit some people to the Railway Protection Force. But there was another report that you have entrusted the responsibility of recruiting such a force with the Government of West Bengal. Of course, you are now ruling that State since the Centre has taken over the responsibility for the State of West Bengal. If you really want to raise that force, it should be done in collaboration with the State administration, but then, it should also be done quickly so that the offences like theft, wire-cutting, removal of fish-plates and sabotage which are some causes for the accidents may be prevented, and the force really acts as the protector of the railway tracks. I want that the Government should complete the investigation, and immediately deploy the men in the different areas for protecting the railway line. I do not want to go into the details. As I have said, if there is an enquiry report, on that basis, I would have really dealt with this matter as to what are the causes and what are the remedies that we could suggest .

As I suggested and if you consider it desirable, a small Committee of Members of Parliament should be instituted to go into these causes of the accidents, and make suggestions for remedial measure to be put through. But that Committee should submit its report within 15 days, and after

[Shri Samar Guha]

15 days action should be taken on the basis of the report of the Committee.

Though I am the prime Mover of this motion, since I have a pressing engagement, I may be permitted to go.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE (Calcutta—North East) : I have been rather astonished to read the statements laid on the Table of the House by the Minister in relation to these two very serious accidents. In regard to the accident between Hotar and Magrahat stations, all that is vouchsafed to us is that there was a total failure of communication at about 7.30 one evening, and that the next morning, at about 4 O' clock, a light engine started and it had a head-on collision with another light engine at about 4 O'clock when these days things begin to get clear, and about 40 minutes later, there was a full-fledged train which came and collided with the Up Light Engine. This kind of thing happens on railway tracks—or is it no man's land or what—where this kind of thing happens. I cannot understand why even though it was immediately after the event, the Minister could not have given us some little informations as to how this kind of thing could happen, a most extraordinary thing: this total failure of communication, whatever that might be. In spite of the lack of communication, a light engine starts at somebody's behest, and then it collides with another light engine. 40 minutes later, a full-fledged trains comes and collides with it and nine or ten people die, and that is the end of the matter. You just report it; the Minister reports it.

Next comes the Ultadanga Road Station case. This station is inside the precincts of Calcutta City, a part of the constituency which I happen to represent in this House. This is a station next to Sealdah. This is a station which is over-worked throughout night and day. This is a station which is most ill-served as far as any kind of facility for the passengers is concerned. There is not even a

loudspeaker system, there are several platforms and people have no sheds to wait in when it is either raining or too terribly sunny. People do not even know when the platforms are changed. They have to run from one to the other. The over-bridges are not sufficient. The platforms are inadequate. Anyhow, this is a hell of a station which is a disgrace to the Eastern Railway altogether. Anyway, it is inside Calcutta City, it is next to Sealdah station, it is part of a network where the railways are operating on the busiest possible scale, and therefore, this is a station where at any rate some kind of efficiency should be expected, even though our Ministers do not seem to care about it.

Now, what happens there? At about 20.30 hours on the 31st of July while Suburban Train No. P-938 Down was standing on the down Suburban line of the Ultadanga Road Station, another Suburban train, which is also a Down train, came from behind and collided. How could it happen? What happened? Were the signals somewhere faulty? Or what was it, who was responsible? Was it a technical fault, or human mistake? We get no idea at all. Nine persons have been killed, more people perhaps have been killed than now mentioned to us by the Minister. They make some *ex-gratia* payment to somebody or other, and that is all there is to it. In the other accident so many people are killed and they tell us about the possibility of some more bodies being found. How exactly are the railways being operated, I do not understand.

I do not like the ideas of a small committee of Members of Parliament going into it. What have Members of Parliament to do with it? What do they know about it? Most of them are completely ignorant about this kind of thing. They form a Committee and go and have a cup of tea with a lot of savouries and sweet and come back and sign whatever document they get.

It is ridiculous to suggest that for this sort

of thing a Committee of Members of Parliament should go and look into the matter. After all, there are experts in the matter, people who deal with this kind of thing. What do they say? I hope the Minister will come forward later with some kind of a rational account. It cannot be an explanation, nothing can explain, nothing can exonerate this sort of failure, but some kind of rational account of how these miserable accidents did happen to take place, we shall perhaps have from him, but it does suggest that the railways there are left to run almost on their own that there is no direction, that if there is a failure, human failure or technical failure, then this kind of incident happens, this kind of incident which cannot be envisaged in any sort of rational set-up. How is it that because it is dark, because you do not have communications with the next station, one light engine comes, another light engine comes and they collide very happily together, how does it happen, I do not understand. How does it happen that 40 minutes later another full-fledged train comes and collides with the double collision? What is all this nonsense? And why should it happen in Ultadanga Road station, inside Calcutta city, with refugees swarming all over the place all the open grounds being full of refugees and evacuees and all the rest of it, with traffic humming all over the place 24 hours day and night, how can it happen so near Sealdah where the network is supposed to be so efficient, so well organised and so large? Something has to be done about it.

These two statements appear to me fantastically inefficient. It gives us no information except intimation of a kind of accident which in reason could never be allowed to happen, but, has happened. I do not know what to say in regard to that. I shall wait to hear what the Minister says.

The other day in Japan there was a very serious airways accident and the Japanese Minister went there, bent down his head and touched the feet of some of

the relatives of the people who had died, asked their forgiveness, went back to Tokyo and gave his resignation. I remember that soon after we had come to this Parliament, in the first Parliament, Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri took the responsibility for certain accidents which had taken place in the South and he resigned. I am not one of those who get up from time to time and say that I want the resignation of the Railway Minister. I am not asking for the resignation of the Railway Minister because I know that the resignation of Mr. Hanumanthaiya and the substitution of him by somebody else is not the remedy for this sort of thing. What is the good of asking for the resignation of the Railway Minister? He can make a gesture and make a name for himself. That is his business. Mr. Shastri got a tremendous reputation because he gave up the job. He was a good man, a man with simple faith and conviction in certain things, certain values in which he had real belief, and therefore, he did command the respect of the country, and his resignation was only an incidental part of the reasons why he did command respect. Mr. Hanumanthaiya may choose to get some publicity and some reputation for himself, even at this stage of his political aggrandisement he can get some advantage by resigning, that is the business.

I am not asking for his resignation. But who is responsible ultimately? This House should be told about these things. Our people live in those areas and there are absolutely irrational happenings which lead to such suffering on the part of the people. I should like to wait for a while and find out what exactly happened. These enquiries which are promised are routine matters. I do hope that the minister does not take shelter behind the perpetual excuse that, anything that happens on the Eastern Railway would happen, because after all, West Bengal is such a terribly distracted area and we can do nothing about it. Don't please give us that kind of excuse that merely because on the Eastern Railway you are

[Shri H. N. Mukerjee]

having certain kind of troubles, anything might happen. That would not pass muster. Don't take shelter under that. Tell us what happened, how it could happen—something which is absolutely inexplicable—where the responsibility lies and what you are going to do to punish those who are culpably responsible for this loss of human life and so many other kinds of loss.

Sir, I am glad the House has this opportunity to ask the Railway Minister to explain much more positively, clearly and categorically then what is stated in these two particular documents which to my mind are so footling, trivial and unexplanatory, that it is almost a contempt of Parliament to lay on the Table of the House this kind of documents.

SHRI MADHURYYA HALDAR (Mathurapur): Sir, whatever may be the statement of the Railway Minister or the report of the departmental enquiry, the railway ministry is solely responsible for the accident that occurred between Magrahat and Hotar. There is a culvert called Vetka between Hotar and Magrahat. At that point, the underground cable for telephonic communication between Hotar and Magrahat was stolen by miscreants. The theft first occurred on 17-4-71 and these two stations were out of communication for 5 hours and 10 minutes. Then on 30-4-71, for 8 hours there was no communication. In May, there were 13 cases of theft, causing dislocation of communication for a total of 148 hours and 50 minutes. Again in June, there were 10 cases of thefts causing dislocation of communication for a total of 130 hours. Then, just before this accident, on 1st July, there was no communication between these two stations for 16 hours, on 3rd July for 14 hours and 15 minutes, on 4th July for 14 hours and 45 minutes and again 5th July at 7.15 p.m. the theft occurred at that particular point called Vetka. The P & T Department again and again requested the railway administration for protection of that bridge and

prevention of theft there, but the railway administration did nothing about it. They did not even try to arrange alternative means of communication like wireless between these two stations, which was established after the accident took place on 6th July morning. The railway are spending crores on RPF. If the RPF had been posted there, there would have been no theft and possibly no accident would have occurred. The All India Station Masters' Association represented the matter to the Divisional Superintendent, Sealdah on 22nd June 1971. The Assistant Station Master of Hotar, Station Master of Hotar and Assistant Station Master of Sonarpur represented the matter to the Divisional Superintendent of Sealdah on the 10th of June 1971. They had to work under pressure from two sides, from the passengers and also from Sealdah control. If they do not work as per directions and orders of Sealdah control they will be punished.

Again, who is responsible for pushing these two light engines in tender foremost position without buffer light and side lights, one up and another down, to and from Magrahat and Hotar? It is certainly Sealdah and not the Assistant Station Masters of Hotar or Magrahat. Yet, they have been suspended. So, the lower category staff are suspended for the faults of the bureaucrats. These assistant station masters have to work for hours on end. Instead of 8 hours work they have to work for 12 hours because certain assistant station masters have been sent for refresher course and no substitutes have been offered. So, there is no relief, no weekly rest to some assistant station masters. The assistant station master at Hotar had to work for more than 12 hours because another assistant station master of the station was directed by the Divisional Operating Superintendent of Sealdah to go for refresher course at Dhanbad.

The guard of that particular passenger train, SD 103 Up was recently promoted

from Class IV to T.C. helper. He had no training as a guard. Still he was working as a guard because he was the favourite of the Divisional Operating Superintendent. This is an instance of nepotism.

The Railway Ministry on page 18 of Central Facts and Major Problems of Indian Railways says that miscreants are causing some dislocation in traffic by theft of overhead wires, cables etc. The Railway Minister had stated in his budget speech that he had talks with Bengal and Bihar Government on the prevention of such thefts. May I know how many of these thefts have been apprehended. The Railway Ministry admitted that there are some receivers of these stolen property and certainly some stolen property is ultimately sold to the railways. Thus, the railway administration becomes the ultimate recipient of its own stolen property.

As I mentioned earlier, the lower category staff of the traffic department had to work under pressure from both the passengers and the railway administration. That particular driver of SD 103 UP was forced to go to duty under threat of punishment. He had some money with him. He wanted to deposit the money at his home before going but he was not allowed the time because he was threatened to go to duty otherwise he will be punished.

16.00 hrs.

Now, I am going to speak about relief operations. The Inspector of Movement (Traffic Safety) was travelling in that particular relief van. He detained the train for 45 minutes at a station 1½ miles away. What business had he to travel in that train? As regards the question of compensation the injured person is getting Rs. 400 while the next of kin of the dead is getting Rs. 500—difference of Rs. 100 between dead and injured.

Finally, I have received three applications from injured persons who were treated in the First Aid dispensary of the

Primary Health Centre of the West Bengal Government but they were turned out from the Scaldah Divisional Office saying that they will not be given any compensation. I will hand over these three applications to the Railway Minister who may get justice done to these three people. Sir, there is a press report in the *Statesmen* that 25 trains will be discontinued and the speed will be brought down from 60 to 40 m.p.h. Thus, the Railway Administration is going to punish the passengers instead of the thieves. And this is the way of subsidy to the suburban passengers. They cannot punish the thieves. It is because of sheer inefficiency of the Railway Administration that they are going to punish the passengers. I request the Railway Minister to reply to all the points raised by me.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI (Calcutta South): Sir, in connection with the accidents between Hotar and Magrahat and the recent accident at Ultadanga we have received the statement which was laid on the Table of the House. In the statement it was simply explained about the situation how the accident happened and the latest development, that is, after these accidents what was done by the railway authorities, and nothing more than that. The situation of the accident and the miseries of the people after the accident were so acute and terrible that I expected when I took my chance to participate in this debate that certain short reply or statement will come to us giving certain informations, for which and for what reasons, who was responsible, etc. because in the first accident on 6-7-1971 it was written in the statement that from 7.50 p. m. to the whole night there were no communication channels by way of telephone, telegraph, etc.

I cannot understand, in spite of all these difficulties, when the whole communication has collapsed, how the station master or the yard master advised or directed the railway drivers to start the

[Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munsi]

light engines. I cannot follow it. Secondly, how, in spite of the collapse of communications, even the Traffic Superintendent, who is a high dignitary in the railways and who is a highly paid officer, advised those people to go with the trains.

About the second accident that has happened in Ultadanga very recently in Calcutta, the signalling authorities there know that on the suburban line there was a passenger train after every 15 minutes either from Sealdah to Ranaghat or from Sealdah to Krishnanagar. After 15 minutes usually the local train passes. I cannot follow how the signalling authorities allowed the other train to go on the same track.

So, I think, the trouble was absolutely with the railway officials. It was their negligence of duty and job and they should be punished.

Ultimately, what we have seen is that one Additional Commissioner of Railway Safety was appointed to inquire into the matter of accident. Of course, we have not yet received the inquiry report. But it is my view—I do not know what is the view of other Members in West Bengal when a student dies or is killed in the lock-up of the police, the inquiry authority is vested in the Commissioner of Police or the officer in charge of the stations. When some railway mischief is done in which the railway authorities are responsible the inquiry commission or the higher authority goes to the railway authority itself. I cannot understand how the truth will come out as to the exact cause and who were responsible.

In view of this I would like to know whether on further occasions the Minister is ready to appoint some high power authority, apart from railways, to investigate into these matters—of course, not Members of Parliament as Shri Samar Guha suggested. That Member always thinks that in all cases, whether it is Bangla

Desh or Netaji probe or railway accident, some Members of Parliament should be appointed to look into the matter.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour) : Self-appointing authority.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI : Jack of all trades.

I want to know whether the Minister is ready to do that.

Then, coming to compensation, if I go to the train without ticket; I may be caught by the railway police, put into the jail or asked to pay a fine because I am guilty; but when passengers travelling in the train get into a difficulty or meet with an accident due to the railway authorities' negligence, it is the railway authorities who will pay to the passengers. What will they pay? I do not want compensation. I want to know whether the Minister is ready, without giving compensation, to give fresh appointment opportunities to the survivors of the families who lost their lives. Rs. 500 or Rs. 1,000 is not relief to a family whose head of the family dies. So, I would like to appeal to the Minister and know from him categorically whether the survivors of the families of those railway personnel and poor passengers—he might be some vendor, shop-keeper, clerk or Grade IV staff of the railways—any member of the family whoever is eligible for any post in the railways, would be provided appointment opportunity in the railways.

My third point is regarding stealing and other things. We always face trouble in West Bengal about stealing of copper wires and other things. In my Railway Budget speech I asked the Minister specifically to make an inquiry. The other friends just now said that it was really unfortunate that what was being stolen was being sold again to the railway authorities. The railway authorities should be responsible to receive this material but who are stealing

it must be inquired into. It is not only the anti-social elements who are stealing it but there are certain politically patronised people who are behind it.

So that, should be enquired into. I should not blame the Railway Protection Force. I have gone through their difficulties. What is the authority of the Railway Protection Force? When something is stolen or damaged and taken away from the railway jurisdiction and put into the civil jurisdiction nearby the railway station, they cannot go there and investigate it. They say, it is under the West Bengal police authority. They cannot go there. These things are being managed by the railway authorities, by *durbans* or something like that. So, there must be some arrangement of amalgamation or cooperation or coordination between the G. R. P. and the R. P. F. to stop all these things. This is related to accidents. As the wires are stolen, the communications collapse. This is what happens. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is about these two particular accidents.

How do the Railway Protection Force and other things come in? Please try to be relevant.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: All this is related. I am very much relevant. When the communications collapse, if the R. P. F. people are permitted to take charge of the railway tracks to look after them, whether any engine or train is coming or not, the number of accidents can be checked.

Lastly, I would submit one thing about the Rajdhani Express which is the speediest train. There have been several attempts to create some collusion or accident with the Rajdhani Express. There was an attempt made near Dhanbad very recently. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether some special attention will be given and protective measures will be taken

to ensure the safety of passengers from apprehended dangers and accidents.

With these words, I would like to ask once again whether the hon. Minister will consider, without giving compensation, the question of providing opportunities of jobs in the railways for the families, the dependants, of those who are killed in the accidents.

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA (Domariaganj): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the accidents in question are very deplorable and I am quite sure the hon. Minister will make enquiries and try to satisfy the House as to why these accidents occurred and what steps are being taken in future to prevent them.

I would like to take a different view of the entire question in order to examine and put a point of view before the House for its consideration. I do not believe that the standard of efficiency in the Railway as a whole has fallen down. I think, the Indian Railways on the whole have been very efficiently running their job and doing it well. Of course, there is a lot of corruption. Corruption is rampant, discipline is lacking and many weaknesses are there.

May I point out to my friends to consider a view point which may appear perhaps relevant to that, that due to proliferation of problems, increasing in numbers, and expansion of the activities of railways, the qualitative change, a deterioration, has come about in the entire functioning and administration of railways? The frequency or travelling has immensely increased. Perhaps, it has gone beyond the control of the Minister concerned or the Railway Board to manage it. Today, the travelling has become so frequent, so rampant, so big, and the traffic has increased to such an extent that everything is lagging behind the increased acceleration that has taken place in the set-up of railway administration in the country.

[Shri K. D. Malaviya]

I think, therefore, that even for the sake of passenger traffic.....

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : सभापति महोदय, मेरा व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है। मदन में गणपूर्ति नहीं है।

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let the bell be rung.....

Now, there is quorum. The hon. Member may continue.

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: I am making out a case that the entire policy of the Government should be not to encourage too much travelling on the Railways. This is my case for your consideration. There is too much travelling now, perhaps, as I think, without any purpose. For a long time when we are developing our economic activities and when we are concentrating on more and more increase of freight traffic on the Railways, I think it is much better that we do not allow specials for Kumbh Melas, Ardh Kumbh Melas, Amavasya Melas, etc. when millions travel taking advantage of the charitable disposition of the hon Minister for Railways. I think it is high time that we should give very serious thought to discourage the railways.....(Interruptions) Especially, Mr, Chairman, in Bihar and the eastern part of India, I think this policy will perhaps do good to us, whether it is a question of stealing copper wire or mismanagement or anything. People do not make mistakes in order to kill people. It is unconsciously being done and why have these various accidents come up before us? Because of certain qualitative change that has come up in the entire administrative machinery. There are technical reasons, too many technical and complicated reasons which are becoming perhaps beyond the control of the railway administration. Even if you employ a thousand men, you cannot control the very nature of the problems that are being created by increase in

passenger traffic. Therefore, the Government should very seriously consider whether it is really profitable for them also and as a social good to increase the traffic as such. Because of that why should we not discourage the passenger traffic?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA) : It is my fundamental right.

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA : What is the fundamental right?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : To-day the railway service has deteriorated to such an extent that I very much would like to say :

Travel by plane and be on the top of the world.

Travel by Indian Railways and see thy grave-yard.

I had repeatedly asked and during the budget I had repeatedly requested hon Mr. Hanumanthaiya, if he kindly lends his ears to us, to depute some special team from the Railway Board to look after the Sealdah Division which has very nearly gone sick. In two months you had two head-on-collisions. You cannot talk of removal of fish plates, sabotage, unfortunately for you.

In the Ultadanga accident, the death toll shown by the Railways is unacceptable to us because our information is that the number of people who died is much more than what you have told us.

AN HON MEMBER : What is the source?

SHRI JOYTIRMOY BOSU : I will tell the Minister. I am speaking on your behalf. This Ultadanga accident could be attributed to the overworked motorman.

He was fatigued. There was some slight drizzle; his eyes were fatigued; he could not see the red signal; therefore collision took place. This is my guess. There have been frequent thefts of underground cables; this happened for 30 times in about 3 months. Trains are made to run without any signal. It is a very serious accident. Three engines, mobile things, collided with each other almost within a very short span of time. What actually happened on that night? My information is this. Sealdah Control forced the Assistant Station Master to run the train violating Rule 161 to 164 of Chapter VII of Block Working Manual. Let Mr. Hanumanthaiya correct me if I am wrong. Let him tell me if this is correct or not. We have been urging again again that the Railways must stop the thefts of wires; but what happened? 30 times it has taken place; no action was taken. Neither Sealdah nor Calcutta division took any steps or made any alternate arrangements to ensure the safety of the passengers. In that ill-fated passenger, the guard was only a Class IV staff. He was allowed to work as Guard just one month before that accident. I want to know from Mr. Hanumanthaiya whether this is true or not.

He was admitted on flimsy grounds in the Railway Hospital so that he does not appear before the Inquiry Commission. And, once the papers were prepared, after 7 days he was allowed to come and appear in the public. Police did not see the relevant documents in time. The authorities changed the chart on 8th of July, after the accident.

What is most important is this. As laid down in the Commission of Inquiry Act of 1952, a judicial inquiry must be instituted in both the cases of these accidents that have taken place. Departmental inquiry is nothing but a farce.

Now, what about taking Insurance cover for all the railway passengers? Now, life insurance, general insurance, everything, is under your control. You can have

a blanket cover for the passengers, and for the cargo. The poor man may get something so that his family is saved of starvation. Kindly consider this suggestion and see if you can work it out.

About cable thefts, I have got a few press cuttings. You have got so many forces, the Railway Protection Force, the Police force, the Armed Force, the Central and State Protection force and all that. They are your pet children, saviours from everything. I can tell you what they are doing. There is one item in *Jugantar*. It says :

“The French Government’s cable costing Rs. 3 lakhs was stolen and it was recovered from the house of a Railway Protection Force member, from his village home in Purnea district.”

Is this true or not, Mr. Hanumanthaiya? What about your Railway Police? Please see the item in *Jugantar* dated 2-8-71.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What has all these things to do with the accident?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Sir, these accidents have all happened due to the repeated thefts of cables. They are blaming that thefts of cables and wires have been taking place and therefore, accidents are occurring, and these thefts are taking place with the connivance of the railway officials. I am giving just a little information on that.

SHRI P.M. SAYEED (Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands): He is misleading the House.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: In the police barracks as Berhampore...

MR CHAIRMAN: It is better that the hon. Member confines himself to this particular accident under discussion now.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Within the police barracks of Berhampore district

[Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu]
and Murshidabad, a lakh of rupees worth of stolen railway property was recovered only the other day. I would like to know whether it is correct or not.

MR CHAIRMAN : This is about wires, but the hon. Member is referring to theft of railway property.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : It includes wires and cables and wheel fittings and other things. There is cable thieving and again the wheel axle fittings etc. are removed, and as a result, thousands of wagons are remaining immobilised. This is a ring where the police and antisocial elements and a section of the railway officials are hand in gloves and they are functioning in this ring. So, the hon. Minister has to cure the internal arrangement before he goes anywhere else.

This statistics that the hon. Minister is giving about railway accidents has lost all meaning. In our country, unfortunately, death does not agitate Government because life is so very cheap : The Railway Board has proved thoroughly unequal to this task...

MR CHAIRMAN : Are we having a railway debate once again or are we having a debate on this particular accident ?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : These accidents have all arisen because of inefficiency, collaborating with thieves and so on.

SHRI P. M. SAYEED : He is not confining himself to this accident.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Why does he not get up and speak instead of coming here as a running commentator. I have never heard him speak in this house.

SHRI P. M. SAYEED : I am only requesting the Chairman to rule it as irrelevant. I am only pointing this out to him. I am not talking to the hon. Member but to the Chairman.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Let us get the record of Shri K. D. Malaviya's speech, and let us compare it with what are saying, and he will find that there is not much difference, because we have to tackle the problem from the national angle.

MR CHAIRMAN : When Shri Priya Ranjan Das Munsii was speaking, I had requested him to confine himself to the point. Similarly, I am requesting the hon. Member also to confine himself to the point, and not go over the whole ground.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : These are all interconnected. 62 lakhs of passengers are exposed to risk every day, and 10,000 trains are running every day, covering about 60,000 k.m. In 1966-67, there had been 48,235 casualties, 41,270 direct responsibility, 1572 fatal and 3471 injured.

The Kunzru Committee's report says clearly that 75 per cent of the accidents are avoidable. The Rajadhyaksha committee report as well as the Kunzru committee report have said that it is due to fatigue and exhaustion of the working staff. They say that although in records it is said that the employees work only for ten hours, yet sometimes they work for 14 hours and even more. So, if the hon. Minister really wants to prevent the railway accidents which are becoming so frequent today, he has to look into the matter from a far bigger angle instead of trying to find a remedy for each and every single accident and trying to white-wash the whole thing.

I condemn the Railway Administration today, and I say that they must provide adequate compensation to the families of those who have been killed in these accidents.

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय (मुरेना) :
सभापति जी, 193 के अन्तर्गत श्री समर
गुहा द्वारा यह चर्चा उठाई गई है, मैं सदन

को बतलाना चाहता हूँ कि यह जो दुर्घटना हुई है, इस का मुख्य कारण है—कर्मचारियों से समय से अधिक काम लेना। वे लोग इतने ज्यादा थक जाते हैं कि सावधानी से काम नहीं कर पाते। अनेकों बार पहले इस सदन में इस बात की चर्चा उठाई गई है.....

सभापति महोदय : यह घटना कैसे घटी है, इस बात पर बहस है।

श्री हुकमचन्द कछवाय : मैं वही बता रहा हूँ। उन से अधिक काम लिया गया और असावधानी के कारण यह घटना हुई है। मैं इस समय इतना ही कहना चाहता हूँ कि जिस कारण से भी यह घटना हुई, क्या उसकी न्यायिक जांच हुई है? इस के लिये कौन दोषी हैं, क्या छोटे कर्मचारी दोषी हैं या बड़े अफसर दोषी है। यदि बड़े अफसर छोटे कर्मचारियों के साथ लापरवाही और बेरहमी के साथ व्यवहार करते हैं, उन से अधिक काम लेते हैं, और उनकी मानसिक थकान के कारण यह घटना हुई है तो जांच से सारे तथ्य आपके सामने आयेंगे। मेरा यह विश्वास है और यह सत्य है कि यह घटना बहुत अधिक काम लेने के कारण हुई है।

अब जहाँ तक चोरी की बात है, इस में कोई सन्देह नहीं काफी चोरियां होती हैं। मुझे भी उधर काफी घूमने का मौका मिला है, पटरियां उखाड़ देते हैं, जान-बूझ कर कुछ ऐसे तत्व हैं जो लोगों की जान लेने के लिये हाथ धोकर पीछे पड़ें हुए हैं और देश में आतंक फैलाना चाहते हैं। क्या ऐसे तत्वों को सरकार कड़ी निगाह से, अधिक सतत हो कर पाबन्दी लगा सकती है, अरेस्ट कर सकती है, दण्ड दे सकती है? मैं चाहता

हूँ कि इस घटना की न्यायिक जांच की जाय, ताकि तथ्य सामने आ सकें।

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री (पटना) : सभापति महोदय, यह जो होटार मैगराहाट में 6 जुलाई को दुर्घटना हुई, जिस में 19 आदमी मरे और बहुत सारे घायल हुए, जिन में 6 रेलवे मजदूर मरे, इस तरह की घटना आये-दिन होती रहती हैं। इस सम्बन्ध में आल इण्डिया स्टेशन मास्टर्ज एसोशियेशन का जां मुख-पत्र है—मूवमेन—उस के कुछ अंश पढ़ कर सुनाना चाहता हूँ ताकि आप को वास्तविकता की जानकारी हो सके और आप जानकारियों के आधार पर समुचित कार्यवाही कर सकें, जिससे कि आइन्दा इस तरह की दुर्घटनायें न हों और आम जनता या रेलवे कर्मचारियों की मृत्यु न होने पाये।

सभापति जी, वह अंश इस प्रकार है—

“There was total failure of communications between Hotar and Magrahat on the previous night. Trains were run of special rules for running trains during total failure of communications on single line. Magrahat sent line clear enquiry by the last up. passenger train for 3 trains in a series, namely, Up goods Special or SD 101 Up, SD 103 Up. Hotar granted line clear by last Dn. passenger train for three trains, namely SD 101 Up, UP Goods Special and SD 103 UP (leaving Magrahat at 4.44 hours). SD 101 Up first passenger train arrived Hotar safely. But there was one light engine to go to down direction to work up Goods Special for which line clear was granted.

“It is stated that the Section Controller forced the ASM on duty at Hotar to push the light engine in down direction as the Up Goods Special was not supposed to come through line clear for the same was

[श्री रामवतार शास्त्री]

granted. Moreover, this light engine was to work that Goods Special. If the goods special was not running, there was a time lag of about 1½ hours till SD 103 Up starts at 4.44 hours. Under these compelling circumstances of threatening by controller in the name of officers to punish the ASM if he did not push the engine, the ASM on duty at Hotar pushed the engine in down direction with authority to proceed with out line clear".

मैं इतना ही पढ़कर सुनाना चाहता था। इससे अन्दाज लग जायेगा कि इसके लिये दौषी कौन है। ग्राम तौर से जब कोई दुर्घटना होती है तो हम लोग मजदूरों पर लांछन लगाकर निकल जाते हैं, अफसरों को कभी पकड़ा नहीं जाता है। यह ठीक है कि अगर कोई मजदूर गलती करता है तो उसको जरूर पकड़िये लेकिन ग्राम तौर से कभी भी कोई अफसर पकड़ा नहीं जाता है। आप इसकी ठीक से जांच कराइये तो आप देखेंगे कि सेक्शन कंट्रोलर ने किस तरह से काम किया। अगर उन्होंने गलत काम किया तो उनको पकड़ा जाना चाहिए। उनकी असावधानी की वजह से, उनकी कर्तव्य-परायणता में कमी की वजह से इतने बहु-मूल्य जीवन गए। इतने लोग और कर्म-चारी मर गए। तो मैं आपका ध्यान इसी तरफ दिलाना चाहता हूँ कि आप आसानी के साथ रेल मजदूरों पर दोषारोपण करके अलग न हों जायें नहीं तो आगे और भी एक्सीडेंट्स इसी प्रकार होते रहेंगे। इसमें सख्ती करने की जरूरत है और अफसरों को पकड़ने की जरूरत है। जैसे आपने टाइम पर ट्रेन्स को चलाने के सम्बन्ध में गलती की तो कहीं कहीं उसमें सुधार हुआ है। इसी तरह से आपने बड़े बड़े अफसरों को इधर से उधर तबदील किया—यह भी अच्छा काम किया है। इसी प्रकार से पूर्वी रेलवे में जो

दुर्घनायें हुईं उनमें अगर आप यह कहकर निकल जायेंगे कि नक्सलाइट्स ने करवा दीं, वहां ला एंड आर्डर खराब है या पूर्वी क्षेत्र बिल्कुल डिस्टर्ब्ड है तो इससे काम नहीं चलेगा। यदि आप अस्लियत को दबायेंगे तो इस तरह का गोल-माल करने वाले अफसर छुट्टा घूमते रहेंगे और मामूली कर्मचारियों को आप सजा देते रहेंगे लेकिन बीमारी अच्छी नहीं होगी। इसलिए मैं चाहता हूँ कि यदि आप चाहते हैं कि आगे इस तरह की दुर्घटनायें न हों तो आप इन बातों पर ध्यान दीजिए। मुख-पत्र में बहुत सी बातें हैं जिनको मैं कह सकता हूँ, इनको मैं आपके पास भेजूंगा और यदि सभापति महोदय इजाजत दें तो इनको टेबिल पर रखने के लिए भी तैयार हूँ ताकि आपको पूरी जानकारी हो सके और इन बातों की जानकारी करके कार्य-वाही कीजिए—यही मेरा निवेदन है। तभी हम इन एक्सीडेंट्स को बचा सकेंगे और इनकी वजह से देश को, जनता को और रेल मजदूरों को जो क्षति होती है जीवन की और धन की वह समाप्त हो सकेगी। यही मेरा निवेदन है कि आप इस तरफ ध्यान दीजिए और इसकी छानबीन ठिकाने से होनी चाहिए, इसको हश-अप नहीं होना चाहिए। अगर आप रेलवे अफसरों से इन्कवायरी करायेंगे तो वे क्या करेंगे इसको आप समझ सकते हैं—वे अफसरों को तो बचायेंगे और रेल मजदूरों पर छुरी चलायेंगे। यही मुझे आपसे निवेदन करना था।

सभापति महोदय : आप उसको टेबिल पर मत रखिए बल्कि मिनिस्टर के पास भेज दीजियेगा।

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA) : Sir, the

House is rightly concerned about these accidents. I myself feel very miserable whenever I get information that an accident has taken place. Several Members naturally are anxious to know the reasons for these accidents. Particularly my young friend Mr. Das Munsî wanted to have the truth, the real truth, regarding this accident.

श्री हुकम चंद कछवाय : सभापति महदोय, सदन में गरापूर्ति नहीं है ।

MR. CHAIRMAN : The bell is being rung. Now there is quorum. He may continue.

SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA : The hon. member Shri Das Munsî was very particular that the enquiry must be impartial and the truth must be known. If the railway administration holds an enquiry and comes to some conclusion, that naturally cannot be accepted as impartial and true. Therefore, statutory provision has been made that the enquiry should be held by an independent authority. In the appropriate Act a separate Commission to make such enquiries has been constituted, and that Commission is not under the jurisdiction of the Railway Ministry. It is deliberately put under the charge of a different Minister. It is now under the charge of the Minister of Tourism. Therefore, in order to ensure that the enquiry is impartial, that the truth is ascertained, Parliament in its wisdom has passed an enactment creating a separate, independent, impartial authority for the purpose of enquiring and finding out the truth.

My hon. friend Mr. Mukerjee and others were very particular that they must know the reasons for these accidents. If I give the reasons, either it will prejudice the enquiry, or it may not be ultimately found to be correct in the light of the enquiry in a court. Therefore, the very

many questions that have been asked by various members are relevant, but these questions have to be answered by the enquiry, and these two accidents are under enquiry. We have not yet got the reports of these two enquiries. As soon as they are ready, I will gladly have the reports placed before the House for your consideration and scrutiny.

I am in agreement with the point made by Mr. Ramavatar Shastri and several other members that this accident should not furnish an opportunity to punish the lower category people, to victimise the people who are in the lower echelons of the Railway Administration. I assure you that no such thing can ever be done so long as I am here. I will not protect anybody higher up in order to punish those lower down.

So far as over-working and pressurisation are concerned, such things are not allowed, so far as I am aware. The Kunzru Committee, to which reference was made by several hon. members made this recommendation. The Railway administration has accepted it and is implementing it. If there are any violations against the accepted policy and rules, and they are brought to the notice of appropriate authorities or even to my notice, by hon. members, I will take strict notice of it. The policy that hon. members think as wise has already been accepted by the railways. Only in the implementation part of it, it may be defective here and there. Whenever it is pointed out, against those officers who pressurise the workers and make the railway staff at lower levels work for longer hours than warranted and put them to physical and mental strain, I assure the House that I will take appropriate steps. Unfortunately, in this case the driver is dead, but the records show that he was not overworked. In fact, he had a break of about 18 hours. He started after full rest and by the time the accident took place, he had worked for only 4

[Shri Hanumanthaiya]

hours. Therefore, in this case at least, there was no question of the driver being fatigued by over-work. But the enquiry may go into this question also whether there was fatigue due to over-work and make appropriate findings. We have accepted the policy and framed the rules for this purpose. If there is any deviation from it, it has merely to be pointed out to me or to the appropriate authorities and we will take action. There is no question of allowing pressurisation of drivers, guards or station masters or any staff.

Several members have referred to compensation. There are set rules so far as *ex gratia* payment and compensation are concerned. In this case also, those rules have been followed. In the case of those who were killed, Rs. 500 *ex gratia* payment is made. This Rs. 500 is not compensation. It is just meant for the funeral and other expenses. People who think that this Rs. 500 is the amount of compensation being paid to the relation of a dead person are wrong. For compensation, there is a separate provision under the Act. *Ex-gratia* payment is quite apart from and without prejudice to compensation claim payable under section 82A of the Indian Railways Act. Compensation can be any amount upto a maximum of Rs. 20,000 in respect of any one person who has been injured or who dies as a result of an accident to a train carrying passengers. Therefore, compensation claim is quite a separate from *ex gratia* payment and we should not confuse one with the other. Wherever people are dead or seriously injured, the proper procedure would be followed in the matter of paying compensation.

SHRI P. M. MEHTA (Bhavnagar) : The term *ex gratia* is not proper. What is *ex gratia* here ?

SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA : So far as Bengal is concerned, my hon. friend, Shri H. N. Mukerjee warned me not to take shelter behind the people. He is a

very good man and I do not know why his goodness has not permeated the atmosphere of Sealdah and Howrah stations which, he says, are in his constituency. The kind of things going on at Sealdah and Howrah stations are beyond one's comprehension. They cannot even be described. If compared with the people who purchase tickets, the number of people who do not purchase tickets is in such an overwhelmingly greater number that it is impossible to have staff to check them. The position in Sealdah station is such that even season ticket-holders find that their seats are occupied by ticketless travellers and so they also come to the conclusion that it is better not to purchase tickets when there are so many ticketless travellers. The deterioration in the situation in that area is not a matter for taking shelter. It is a matter of utmost shame. I do not say that we are not responsible and somebody else is responsible. As a nation we have to bow our head in shame about ticketless travel and various other activities that are going on in those areas. Our efforts should be to check these activities.

If it happens in my State or Andhra or Tamilnadu, where ticketless travel and the criminally-minded people are few the police can tackle it. But if out of 1,000 passengers 900 go without tickets and when the ticket checking staff go to them they are beaten, stabbed or thrown out of the train then it is difficult to tackle such a situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Then how ticketless travel is connected with the accidents ?

SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA : Sir, you may be very wise in your remark but the atmosphere that was described by the hon. Members has to be cleared and we have to defend the government. I cannot accept your wise statement because a lot of things appear in the proceedings and the newspapers, all the time saying that the railway administration is in the wrong,

this government is wrong and the opposition is in the right. I do not accept that point of view.

I am saying all these things, not as a party man but in the true patriotic spirit. The number of thefts that are going on at Scaldah and Howrah are known to hon. Members. We have to apportion blame wherever it lies. So far as the railways are concerned, I own it to the extent we are responsible. But to exonerate everybody else and to blame only the railway administration is not proper. There has to be a sense of proportion.

So far as thefts and criminal activities are concerned, which incidentally are related to accidents also, 412 people have been arrested and detained for criminal activities. Recently, we had several conferences at the State level where the Bengal officials and the railway officials have come to an agreement in order to coordinate our efforts so that these criminal activities are checked. For the last two or three months they are on the low side.

I hope the time will come when we will be able to stop these activities with the goodwill and cooperation of the Members of the Opposition also. It is too serious a matter for party purposes. What is going on in West Bengal is a matter with which all of you are equally concerned—the railways being subjected to such damages, thefts and chain pullings—that blaming the railway administration or blaming a few officers will not be a justifiable attitude to take.

The House will excuse me if I am not able to answer every question that has been pertinently asked because a statutory enquiry is already being held into these matters. Some hon. Members made the suggestion that a Committee of Members of Parliament may be set up and I agree with my hon. friend, Shri H. N. Mukerjee that it is not necessary. If the hon. Mem-

bers of Parliament in whose constituency these things happened make any enquiries I will pay utmost respect to their observations and suggestions. Therefore, it is not necessary that a separate committee should be appointed for the purpose. I have often said, and repeat, that every Member of Parliament is welcome to make suggestions, point out the defects in the administration and I am prepared to rectify those things with utmost sincerity.

Many Members made the suggestion for coordination between State Police, and the Railway Protection Force. That is a welcome suggestion. It is already being implemented. During the last three months we had a series of conferences with the Government of Bihar and Government of West Bengal. They have extended their cooperation and we are working in unison without any hitch whatsoever in order to bring all these criminal activities under control. In addition the Army is also being made use by the Bengal Government and I hope this joint effort of the State Police force, R. P. F. and the Army wherever it is necessary will be able to bring some satisfaction so far as the railway working is concerned.

Many Members of Parliament are rightly concerned about these accidents. When they speak with so much concern an atmosphere is created, that the accidents are happening at such a large scale and in such number that it is almost unsafe to travel by trains. It is not my opinion but of the Wanchoo Committee, which was appointed for the purpose of finding solutions, who made the observation that the Indian Railways are among the biggest railway systems in the world. We run, as hon. Members know, 10,000 trains a day and if one accident or the other takes place here and there, it should not be taken out of the context and exaggerated.

[Shri Hanumanthaiya]

17.00 hrs.

In fact, the figures show that accidents have been decreasing for the last few years. It is not that the number of accidents is going up. It is not that my advocacy is on the one side or the other but it will be seen from the table that the number of accidents came down steadily from 1,293 during 1964-65 to 840 during 1970-71.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Here is the report of the Commissioner of Railway Safety which says talking about the use of WAM-1 engines at page 20 :-

"That above clearly brought out the inherent shortcomings of the WAM-1 locomotive and this aspect was again brought to the notice of the Railway Board in February 1967 for due consideration. Nevertheless, the Railway Board in exercise of their over-riding powers, authorised the Railway Administrations to operate these locomotives at the maximum speed of 100 Km. P. h."

MR. CHAIRMAN : We are only concerned with the two statements, one made by the Deputy Minister of Railways on the 7th July, 1971 regarding the train accident between Hotar and Magrahat stations on the Eastern Railway on the 6th July, 1971, and the other by the Minister of Railways on the 2nd August, 1971, regarding collision between suburban Trains Nos. K-62 Down and P. 398 Down at Ultadanga Road Station of the Eastern Railway on the 31st July, 1971. I do not know how the other points raised by Members and the reply given by him are relevant.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore) : We are hundred per cent in agreement with you. He is saying everything except about the accident.

¹ **SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA :** My hon. friend, Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu, who takes

pride in going to the Library, is very particular about finding out old books and old statistics. All that he wants is some figures in order to blame somebody. He has not yet cultivated an objective attitude of assessing things, blaming where blame is due and appreciating where appreciation is due. He has yet to reach that stage.

The current statistics show that the number of accidents have come down during these 5 years from 1293 to 840. I am not justifying that there must be 830 accidents because that is a lesser figure. Far from it. I will certainly do my very best with the incentive you have given me by way of criticising and making suggestions to see that the accidents are minimised as much as possible.

17.06 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION RE: TAX EVASION BY BIRLAS AND OTHERS IN 1969-70

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN (Telli-cherry) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the tax evasion done by Birlas is a part of the greater question of tax evasion, tax avoidance and also tax arrears occurring in our country in a bigger way. It is a matter of nearly Rs. 1 crore being evaded or kept in arrears by the big business houses and other people. So, if I speak a little beyond the scope of Birlas affairs, I hope, I will be excused.

Then, 5 years after devaluation, the country has come to know about the fact that Birla empire was pre-warned about impending devaluation and it is also alleged that the influence of the monopoly houses is not merely small. They could influence Ministers, they could influence top officials of the banks and they could