

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Friday, July 31, 1987/Sravana 9, 1909
(SAKA)

*The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

Fire safety Measures in High-Rise Buildings in Delhi

*82. SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD†
SHRI PARASRAM BHARDWAJ:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that there are more than 200 high-rise buildings in Delhi which are un-safe because of non-compliance of fire safety rules as reported in the Indian Express dated 1 July, 1987;

(b) if so, whether my survey in this regard has been undertaken or is proposed to be undertaken;

(c) what action is prescribed against the owners of such buildings as are found guilty for non-compliance of fire safety rules;

(d) the number of casualties and other victims and estimated loss of property in the fire incident in] Ansal Bhavan, New Delhi which occurred on 29 June, 1987;

(e) the terms of reference of the enquiry ordered by the Lt. Governor into the fire incident in Ansal Bhavan; and

(f) what long term measures are contemplated by Government to prevent such fire incidents in future ?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (S. BUTASINGH): (a) to (f). A statement is given below.

STATEMENT

194 high-rise buildings have been identified as buildings lacking in adequate fire safety measures. These buildings were constructed prior to notification of Unified Building Bye-Laws, 1983. Under these bye-laws, it has become necessary to obtain a 'no objection certificate' from the Chief Fire Officer, before a completion certificate is granted for a building. In order to enforce fire safety measures in the buildings which had come up before June, 1983, the Delhi Fire Prevention and Fire Safety Act was and it came into force in March, this year. It provides for penalty of imprisonment and fine, if the directions of the Chief Fire Officer are not carried out. Legal notices have been issued to the owners/occupiers of these buildings, to provide the in-built fire safety requirements by 30th September, 1987.

In the fire incident in Ansal Bhavan on the 29th June, 1987, 3 persons were killed and 52 sustained injuries. The estimate of loss of property is not available.

The terms of reference of the Magisterial inquiry ordered by the Lt. Governor into the fire incident are as under:

- i) To ascertain the causes leading to the fire incident,
- ii) Adequacy of fire fighting fitments and other measures in the building,
- iii) Adequacy of fire fighting and other arrangements made by Delhi Fire Service for combating the fire,
- iv) Part played by the Delhi Police and other related agencies for meeting this emergency,
- v) To fix responsibility, if any,

- vi) To suggest remedial measures with a view to preventing recurrence of such incidents, and
- vii) Any other matter relevant to the incident.

SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, fire accidents in Delhi are common features because of total leniency of all Government agencies towards builders and occupants. It is not enough that legal notices have been issued. I want to know what preventive action Government has taken against defaulters under the law ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI): Sir, already it has been stated in the Statement laid, that 194 buildings have been identified as buildings lacking in adequate fire safety measures. These buildings were constructed prior to 1983. We have passed an Act in Parliament. It was enforced on 30th March, 1987 and it has since come into force. All these strict measures have been included in the Act itself. And, we are also giving them notices that if by 30th September, they do not comply with the rules and regulations, legal and stringent action will be taken against them.

SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD: As per the Minister's statement owners/occupiers have been directed to comply with the regulations in regard to fire safety measures before September, 1987. Sir, subsequent to September, 1987 if Government direction is violated, will the defaulters be charged under cognizable offence?

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: Sir, as I have just put before the House, We have given them notices, the rules were framed and the Act was enforced in March, 1987. We have given them the notice and that notice period will extend up to 30th September, 1987 and in between we are inspecting every high-rise building. Some of our staff is going there and we are trying to tell them that before 30th September, they have to com-

plete all the fire security measures. If anywhere we find them lacking in this thing—we are serving them notice and by 30th September their notice period will be over - then stringent action will be taken against all those who are defaulting and violating the rules and regulations.

[*Translation*]

SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, a high rise building cannot be constructed in some days or some months but it takes about 5 years to construct it. Today it is being stated that action will be taken against such buildings. Moreover, the Government officers are also responsible for it because these buildings were constructed with their permission. It appears that the Fire Brigade people and those of the building department had been sleeping while those buildings were being constructed because they did not raise any objection at that time. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether any action will be taken against officers who allowed the builders to construct such buildings? Such buildings are hazardous for both life and property.

[*English*]

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: hope, our hon. friend Shri Agarwal knows that we have taken the strongest action against the DDA officers who sanctioned the building plans of buildings such as the Siddhartha Hotel. We had suspended five officers. If any officer is found violating building bye-laws, we are taking strong action against the concerned.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK: When the building on the Kasturba Gandhi Marg caught fire recently, we saw on the television that the fire brigade personnel did a tremendous job of rescuing people even at the risk of their own lives. Have the Ministry awarded those people with substantial amounts?

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: Yes.

We have also awarded the labourers and contractors who helped in the rescue operations.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): The International Airport Authority people also helped.

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: Yes, they also helped.

SHRI CHANDRA PRATAP NARAIN SINGH: it is a wellknown fact that the water hoses were not long enough to reach the uppermost storeys of these high-rise buildings. From the point of view of environment also, it is wrong to have these buildings side by side. There should be demarcation for certain ground area, certain parking area and also certain area under green cover. Now, these aspects are not taken care of at all in the city of Delhi and that is why, when the fire tenders reached the area, they could not get near the building to put up their ladders and even to throw water. So, in future before these buildings are allowed to be constructed, will the Government see to it that certain area is demarcated for parking, certain area is demarcated for green cover and there should be demarcation for certain ground area. Also, there is always a lot of litter and wiring on the fire escapes and no one can come down from these fire escapes if they are inside the building. It is a wellknown fact that fire escapes should be located outside the building. Will efforts be made to see that this important aspect is taken care of in all the high-rise buildings in Delhi?

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: In fact, we have taken into consideration all the deficiencies that the hon. member has just now pointed out. In all, 12 items are identified and if he wants, I can read them out. Our officers are visiting the high-rise buildings and inspecting whether all these items are being complied with or not. If not, notice are being served on them. You must have ob-

served that recently we have put up sign boards near these high-rise buildings with regard to the deficiencies. We are inspecting these buildings and we are taking sufficient precautionary measures to see that all these deficiencies are removed within three months.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD: I appreciate and welcome the fact that the Government are getting wise after the event and that the officers are visiting every building. But, may I know, Sir, how these moneyed people who construct these mansions and husband huge amounts of money every month could violate the provisions laid down by the Government for years? How could they escape scotfree and how is it that they are not punished? Except the case of those five officers who were suspended, could you give an example where these huge mansion walls got some punishment?

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: I share the anxiety expressed by Shri Azad. He must be aware fully well that because there are certain deficiencies on the building bye-laws, the Parliament in its wisdom has passed this Fire Safety Measures Act. The rules which are framed now are very stringent. As mentioned by the hon. member, when we visit these buildings, we are trying to register cases against the defaulting owners and authorised contractors of these high-rise buildings. Some of them are not here and they are trying to escape also. I can assure that we are taking the strongest measures possible and within three months, that is by 30th September, we see to it that these deficiencies are removed and such accidents do not recur.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: Only the implementation part is left out. That is all!

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE: Sir, in this Ansal Bhavan, we have our National Federation of Indian Women's office. One of our friends got caught there. So, I would like to know two things from you. Firstly, is it a fact that the Helicopter that was sent for rescuing had such draught that it increased

the fire? This was reported in the press. May I know from you whether it was true or not? If so, what happened after the fire? This building is closed now. We are all thrown out here and there. What happened to the compensation for those people who were affected by this fire?

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: The total loss of all these things is being worked out now. The figure of loss and account of everything is not available now because the entire thing is being processed and worked out.

So far as the persons who were injured are concerned, they have already been compensated. Some relief has been given in the case of three Persons who died and also to 52 persons who had been injured in this Ansal Bhavan fire.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE: What about the use of the Helicopter?

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: The Helicopter came for the rescue operations.

(Interruptions)

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: There were persons rescuing people from the Ansal Bhavan. Are you giving them some award or not? That should be noted.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV

GANDHI): Sir, some civilians who were working at the site displayed extraordinary bravery. We have taken note of it and we will do the needful.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Thank you.

Communal Violence

*84. **SHRI HAROOBHAI MEHTA :**
SHRI MOHD. MAHFOOZ ALI KHAN:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cases of communal violence that have occurred in the country during the last three months; State-wise;

(b) the number of casualties and estimated loss of property in these incidents; and

(c) the steps taken or being taken to prevent such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c). A Statement is given below:

(a) and (b). As per available information, the particulars of major communal riots in the country which occurred from 1st April, 1987 to 30th June, 1987 are as under:

STATEMENT

<i>Date and Place</i>	<i>No. of persons</i>		<i>Loss of property</i>
	<i>killed</i>	<i>injured</i>	<i>(Rupees in lakhs)</i>
1	2	3	4
<i>Gujarat</i>			
Virpur (April 9-12)	4	12	102.00
Brauch (May 17-18)	5	22	N.A.
Baroda (June 26 to July 2)	7	10	N.A.