

able commercially. Because of modernization, scrapping took place in the last two years. The other reason is recession, as I have mentioned earlier. Because of that we want to see which sector requires how much fleet. The tonnage has come down, but by the end of the 7th Plan, our plan is to regain the tonnage, and maybe we exceed that.

The second question related to the guarantee given to some foreign companies by the SDFC. Earlier, this was in my department, but now the Government took a decision to shift it to the Finance Ministry. The subject is with the Finance Ministry and, therefore, I cannot give the latest information.

DR. CHINTA MOHAN: The Minister has stated that he was able to save Rs. 43 crores in the Rs. 270 crore deal with South Korea and I congratulate him on the floor of this House for saving this much foreign exchange. In the Hindustan Times of 20th of this month, it was stated that it was due to strict political vigilance that they were able to save this much. I would like to know what is that strict political vigilance. They also said that some middlemen and officials were involved. I want to know categorically who are the middlemen and who are the officials involved. What action do the Government propose to take against the corrupt officials?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: I do not know which newspaper has said what. I do not think, there was any question of political vigilance. It was based on the commercial view of the Shipping Corporation. It was done in a commercial way by the SCI. But when you go and want to buy something, as an individual you want to bargain, saying, "Well this is a thing that I will buy for this much price." We did it in a commercial way. There is no political thing involved in it.

The other thing which the Hon. Member asked is about the involvement of middlemen and some gain here and there. As I said repeatedly, the whole thing was completely reviewed—our requirement of the ships, their profitability, how much returns we are going to get on this investment—and after considering all these factors we approached the South Korean shipyard. We asked them if they could come down this much. It was a commercial market. They knew that if they cancel the order, they will suffer a loss. So, they came down. We thought that it is better to reduce the price and benefit the exchequer. So, this was totally commercialised.

Another thing which I could not reply before is about strengthening the Shipping Corporation. The Shipping Corporation, even during the recession period, has been doing efforts to maintain profitability. All over the world the shipping industry is in recession. We have been making profits. I can quote the figures year-wise but I would like to inform the House that from 1977-80, we went in a loss. From 1980-82 we again made some profits. In 1982-83, we again went in a loss but from 1983 onwards we are making profits and we are making money. SCI is now running in profit.

Fire Accident In Ajmer-Delhi fast Passenger Coach

*44. **SHRI MOHD. MAHFOOZ ALI KHAN:** Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the inquiry into the devastating fire accident in a coach of the Ajmer Delhi fast passenger on 29 November, 1987 resulting in the death of a large number of persons has since been completed;

(b) if so, the findings thereof; and

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken by Government thereon?

[*Translation*]

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD): (a) and (b). A statutory inquiry has been conducted into this accident by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Western Circle working under the Ministry of Civil Aviation. According to his provisional findings, the fire in the coach occurred due to unauthorised carriage of inflammable substance.

(c) Special checks and educative publicity have been instituted against carriage of inflammable articles by the travelling public in the passenger and luggage compartments.

MR. SPEAKER: He has been made the Railway Minister and that is why he is going so fast.

SHRI MOHD. MAHFOOZ ALI KHAN: I am thankful that our new Deputy Minister of Railways has replied.

As it has been stated in the reply that the Commissioner of Railway safety has conducted an inquiry into this accident and according to his provisional findings, the fire in the coach occurred due to unauthorised carriage of inflammable articles. I want to know from the hon. Minister through you, Sir, whether there was not any such rule prohibiting the carrying of inflammable materials in railway compartments? Is it not the responsibility of the R.P.F. present there to ensure that such substances are not carried? I have often seen it myself that petrol and diesel....(*Interruptions*)....I am speaking. Let me continue. Why are you getting annoyed?

Sir, I have seen petrol being carried in the railway compartments and it is done with the connivance of the R.P.F. I want to know as to how many deaths occurred and what amount was granted as compensation to the

victims and by when will the inquiry be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): Sir, the Commissioner of Railway Safety has submitted the preliminary report and later when he will submit the final report, the main reason behind this accident will become clear. As you have stated, it is true that inflammable substances are carried in railway coaches and it is happening quite often, especially in the rural areas. This tendency is particularly true of the rural areas and we are making efforts to check it. However, we are facing considerable difficulties in this regard because the number of passengers in these areas is very large. We will continue to make efforts to check it and to ensure that these things do not happen.

SHRI MOHD. MAHFOOZ ALI KHAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister clarify whether after this incident this aspect is also being examined as to whether any such rule already exists which prohibits carrying of inflammable materials and similar substances in railways coaches and whether after enquiry the person found responsible in this matter will be awarded due punishment?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: The rules are there and efforts are being made to enforce them and as I had just stated we will continue to make efforts in future also and if some employees of the Railways are found guilty, action will be taken against them.

SHRI VISHNU MODI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether it is true that families of some of the accident victims have submitted representations and, whether it is fact that the name of one of the victims, Shri Ram Singh Gehlot, who belongs to Kishanganj and died in this accident, is missing from the list of dead persons because the authorities enquiring

into this accident had not included his name in the list? Will the Government consider this case sympathetically?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: The hon. Member has informed me about it just now. I will certainly get an inquiry conducted into this matter.

SHRI RAM SINGH YADAV: Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the main reasons of this devastating accident in which such a large number of deaths occurred is the carrying of inflammable materials and another and a more solid reason is the lack of internal communication in the train, that is, communication facilities between the guard and the driver were not available and that is why the driver did not stop the train immediately when the accident occurred and the train had covered sufficient distance which resulted in an accident of such magnitude. Has the hon. Minister of Railways considered this aspect as well and is he going to take any steps in this direction so that the communication system of the Railways, rather the internal communication system of the trins can be rectified?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: If the hon. Member had paid attention to the speech which I delivered yesterday, he would have known the we are making efforts to provide communication facilities between the guard and the driver but we have some difficulties here. This is also a part of our modernisation programme.

[English]

Sati Incident

*45 **SHRI SURESH KURUP:**
SHRIMATI BIBHA GHOSH
GOSWAMI:

Will the minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Union Government are aware that some incident of 'Sati' have occurred after the enactment of central legislation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS AND WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA): (a) and (b). It was reported in the Press on the 12th of January, 1988 that a twenty eight year old woman had reportedly committed Sati in Kheria Mishra Village in Lalitpur district in Uttar Pradesh on the 10th January, 1988.

The State Government of U.P., which had promptly initiated investigation into the matter, reported on the 14th January that the investigations made so far had revealed that the incident was not an act of Sati. However, the criminal Investigation Department of the State Government has started further investigation of the case, which is in progress.

SHRI SURESH KURUP: I am not satisfied with the Minister's reply. There were reports in the Press that this has actually amounted to *sati*. This reply is only the reproduction of the official position of the U.P. Government. Since we are all concerned about this thing, I would like to know whether the Central Government would institute an Inquiry directly and report to this House of the findings of the Inquiry?

THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO): We do not have to reproduce either the press report or the Investigation report. Further investigation by the State Government is in progress. So let us see from the facts which have been brought out in the investigation. The investigating authorities came to the conclusion