

**Failure of Safety Measures of Calcutta  
Metro Railway**

\*71. SHRI SATYA SADAN  
CHAKRABORTY :

SHRI SOMNATH  
CHATERJEE :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS  
be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have  
conducted any study of the reasons  
of failures of safety measures of the  
Calcutta metro railway which was  
flooded in the recent deluge ;

(b) if so, details of the findings ;

(c) if not, whether the Government  
intend to conduct such study now ;  
and

(d) if not, the reasons for same ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS  
(SHRI A.B.A. GHANI KHAN  
CHOUHDURY) : (a) to (d) A state-  
ment is laid on the Table of the  
Sabha.

**Statement**

(a) and (b) There was no question  
of failure of safety measures in regard  
to the Calcutta Metro Railway as  
this is still under construction and  
necessary steps have been taken to  
safeguard the same during this period.  
But reasons for the flooding of the  
Metro and the sources of ingress of  
water into Metro Tunnel have been  
gone into for avoiding recur-  
rence.

A high level committee of three  
senior Directors of the Railway Board  
was appointed to go into this on  
11.6.1984 and their report is expected  
shortly.

In the meantime, an expert from  
London. Underground Metro Trans-  
port had been brought from London  
to go into this and he has submit-  
ted his observations and advice.

The foreign expert was satisfied  
with the main design features and  
directions indicated therein and he  
wanted that all other entry points  
into the Metro tunnel from outside,  
namely, the ventilation shaft, the sub-  
way passages on the surface, the open-  
ing left on top of the Metro tunnel  
for lowering and lifting out of coach-  
ing stock to be provided with suita-  
ble covering to prevent ingress of  
water, action on which has already  
been taken.

(a) and (d) Do not arise.

SHRI R.R. BHOLE : I have asked  
this question from the hon. Minister.  
I am from Bombay. But Bombay  
and Calcutta are sisters. Of course,  
Calcutta from where you are coming  
is a big sister.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE :  
What is important is not sister but  
mother-in-law !

SHRI R.R. BHOLE : I have asked  
the question regarding the comple-  
tion of Calcutta's Metro Railway  
Project as well as the hardships and  
the destabilisation of the Calcutta  
congested traffic.

The answer given by the Minister  
is as good as RAM BHAROSE. In  
other words, God alone knows the  
answer and what is going to happen to  
this project. The answer is :

“(a) The completion of the  
project will entirely depend on  
the amount of funds sanctioned  
year by year for this specific project  
and hence it is not possible at

this juncture to give a firm completion date.

“(b) & (c) The length between Esplanade and Snyambazer where Metro tunnelling is to be done is along the Chittaranjan Avenue which happens to be one of the busiest roads in Calcutta and the work has to be taken up under normal road traffic conditions. Also due to the existence of large concentration of tall buildings in the area and the difficult soil conditions underground, great care and precautions have to be taken and special expertise utilised for doing this work. For this purpose, it is necessary to make use of developed modern technology available elsewhere in the world alongwith mechanised equipment to put up special type of diaphragm walls and other protection measures in this length of Metro...”

Now, I want to know whether all these considerations which he is reciting in the answer were taken into account or no when they first started the project.

I also want to know what was the first estimate of the whole project and what was the period within which they proposed to complete the project.

SHRI A.B.A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : I would like to answer his question in two parts. In one part, he criticised that God alone knows when it is going to be completed, etc. etc...

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप तो इस बात का विश्वास करेंगे नहीं ।

श्री इन्द्रजीत गुप्ता : मैं भी आपकी हजाजत से बोलूंगा ।

SHRI A.B.A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : In reply to that, I want to say that the total stretch of the underground is 16.43 km. We have divided it into several sections.

On section is Esplanade to Bhowanipore. It is 3.6 km. This is being made ready for operation.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : It is all flooded out.

SHRI A.B.A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : Let me finish and then you have a number of chances to ask questions.

From Bhowanipore to Tollygunj, it is 3.8 km. This is also almost complete—90 per cent is complete and 10 per cent is not yet done. We hope to complete it in another six months time.

Dum Dum to Belgachia is 2.5 km. It is almost completed. Belgachia to Shyambazar is 1.5 km. This is under construction.

As regards to planned stretch upto Shyambazar which is 5 km. we have not started the work. We consider it the most toughest part of this job because of various reasons, like traffic, density of population, tall buildings etc. etc. I have already answered how much we have progressed.

With regard to the other part of the question, the project for the construction of the Metro Railway from Dum Dum to Tollygunj was sanctioned in 1972 at an estimated cost of Rs. 140 crores. The updated cost of this project at the present-day price level is Rs 800. crores approximately and in the course of next few years which it may take for completion, it may go upto Rs 1000 crores.

So, far between 1972 to 1980, in these 7 years, only Rs. 68 crores were allotted to the project. More allotments are being made every year since 1980, starting from Rs. 27 crores in 1980-81 and Rs. 80.70 crores in 1984-85. Up to the end of 1984-85, Rs. 315 crores would have been allotted, leaving still a large margin to enable the project to be completed. Therefore, based on the constraint of funds, it is not possible for me to give the date within which we will be able to complete the project. But assuming the fund is there—there is no constraint of fund—I have already given you the history that 8 KM or about 9 KM are almost completed. Only 5 KM that is Shyambazar to Esplanade remains. We intend to start the work as quickly possible.

**SHRI R.R. BHOLE :** With the constraints from which the hon. Minister suffers, he seems to have given the best reply possible to the House.

My second question is this. They now say that "some part of this project is very difficult. There are road traffic, the tall buildings, the soil condition underground is very difficult, we have not got the expertise, we have got to develop modern technology and also the mechanised equipment." In other words, this means, that we have got almost everything for the purpose of completing the project for the Chittaranjan Avenue ;

I would ask one question. After the global tender of the Japanese exporter is accepted after negotiations, what will be the rough cost of this particular part of the project when it is completed.

**SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY :** The Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund, Japan have agreed to offer 4.8 billion yen credit, approximately Rs. 20 crores, if the

national tenders are invited for the construction of 5 KM length of major section between Esplanade and Shyambazar. Out of the 5 offers received, one is from Japan and 4 from India. Only 2 firms of Japanese expertise were considered to have adequate experience, financial capacity and technical know-how to take up the work. In terms of Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund guidelines, the letter of intent to the successful bidder has been issued and negotiations are in progress. In terms of the guidelines, contract documents require the approval of Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund before formal acceptance letter can be issued and construction work commenced.

Out of the two firms selected as competent, one is a Japanese firm with Indian collaboration and the other is an Indian firm with Japanese collaboration. Hon. Members will agree with me that the Japanese have a lot of experience in regard to tunnelling and civil works. The Japanese have recently completed a very long railway tunnel under the seabed linking two islands. The period of contract is four years for completion of the work. The value of the contract as advertised is about Rs. 59 crores.

**SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRA-BORTY:** Sir, I am sure by this time you have got an idea about how the Railway Ministry is playing a game with the 10 million people of Calcutta. They started the project, the work is going on, but they do not know what they are going to do about a stretch of land from Esplanade to Shyam bazar. The patient is on the operation table and he is gasping. The doctor at the table is thinking what instruments he will use for surgery and all that...

**PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE:**  
Operation successful, patient died.

**SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRA-BORTY:** When you took up the project, why did you not think about it?

Now the whole city is suffering and you are saying, if money is available, 'negotiations with the Japanese firm are going on' and all these things. What will happen to the poor city of Calcutta Mr. Ghani Khan Choudhury? Apart from this, my question is this. You have seen that recently a portion of the tunnel was flooded and equipment worth Rs. 30 crores had been damaged. In reply to my question, the Minister has stated:

"There was no question of failure of safety measures in regard to the Calcutta Metro Railway as this is still under construction and necessary steps have been taken to safeguard the same during this period."

If that is so, if everything was all-right, how is it that water entered into the tunnel? How is it that, when they had not completed the safety measures, the Minister took the decision to run the railway in the three and a half kilometre stretch. I would like to know precisely from the Minister as to what are the reasons, why the metrorailway was flooded....

*(Interruptions)*

PROF. K. K. TEWARY: He can make this speech on Railway Supplementary Demands. This is Question Hour....

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRABORTY: I would request you, Sir, to teach him the elementary lessons....

MR. SPEAKER: Prof. Tewary thinks that the question is taking a much longer time than the tunnel itself.

SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRABORTY: As per the statement of the hon. Minister, the precautionary measures were not completed. If so, why

was the decision taken to run the railway at that particular stretch on account of which it was flooded? why was this decision taken without completing the precautionary measures?

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am very sorry. Some of the hon. Members think that they are the only custodians of West Bengal....

*(Interruptions)*

DR. SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY: They should have a sense of humour.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY: I would further like to tell them—some of my friends...

SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRABORTY: You tell me. I asked the question.

AN HON MEMBER: He will tell the whole House.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY: Don't forget the Howrah Municipal election results....

*(Interruptions)*

MR SPEAKER: Please confine yourself to the question.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY: In answer to a previous question I have told the entire story of the Metro Railway. There cannot be any doubt and misgivings about what I have said and I can only humbly submit to the House that Metro railway people have done a wonderful job....

SOME HON MEMBERS: Yes, yes.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY: I am coming to the

flooding also. In view of the scarcity of funds and constraints of finance for a number of years, only after 1980 funds were available and the work was done with an amazing speed....

SOME HON MEMBERS : Yes, yes.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : Now the question comes about flooding. The gentleman...

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA : No gentleman. He is an hon Member.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : Yes, the hon. Member has asked me why it was flooded. Well, we are taking the opinions of the experts on this and whatever figure the hon. Member is citing of the loss, I would inform the House, is completely baseless. It is with an eye on the elections. They are not concerned about the flooding of the Metro railway, they are only concerned how to misguide the people.

*(Interruptions)*

It is within the knowledge of everybody.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER : Will you tell the Minister to answer properly ?

AN HON MEMBER : These are all irrelevant things.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER : Why are you shouting ?

SHRI ANANDA GOPAL MUKHOPADHYAY : The whole city of Calcutta was flooded.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER : Don't shout. You will have to go to the hospital again.

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down, Mr Halder.

Please answer. Let us confine ourselves to the question before us.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is within the knowledge of everybody that heavy delugd between 2rd, 3rd and 6th June, 1984 at the onset of the monsoon led to the flooding of the city, comylete collapse of the drainage system leading to paralysing the life in the city and dislocation of all traffic, railway services, airlines and the bus services besides the flooding of the Metro tube.*(Interruptions)*. A total of about 500 m.m. rain occurred in these three days. The Metro Railway story is that they put some bunds at the entrance to the various openings created for facilitating construction of the tunnel to avoid flooding etc.

I shall be giving the expert's opinion afterwards. On this, we have institute a Committee from the Railways three directors. We have not got a report from them. Apart from that, there may be some doubts in the minds of the people that the railway may try to save their skin. So, I have instituted another expert Committee of some eminent engineers to get an independent and constructive perspective into the flooding of Metro. Political action would be useful to prevent any recurrence. An expert committee of three eminent engineers outside the Railways has been nominated. I am not going to tell the names because I do not have the time.

Apart from that, what I did was this, On an urgent request, Mr. C.F. Bonnet, Director of Civil Engineering London Underground Transport System, visited Calcutta Metro Tube from 21-24th June and studied the Metro Project. His observations were to the

effect that continuous rainfall during the period and lack of adequate and timely drainage of the surface caused extensive flooding over large areas of the city, often waist-deep, disrupting all the main services. While discussing some of the specific factors that affect the works in Calcutta, he has observed that Civil Engineering Works were being carried out under very difficult conditions one of them being that flood water will be diverted by locals into any convenient holes, rather than allowing flooding of their quarters or booths.

Mr. Bonnet has said that express congestion does not allow erection of site hoardings and work is carried out in almost among the traffic. People live and work and carry on trades alongside the operations and take over any completed areas or remove material at will. Other authorities are also carrying out extensive works, notably, relaying sewers and tram lines.

“...Flood water will be channelled by locals into any convenient hole rather allowing flooding of their quarters or booths.”

Mr. Speaker, about his asking why we announced the date. We announced the date as we would not have run the show without taking the advice of the experts from Paris and London. As I have already taken the advice in February, 1984 we have appointed them as permanent consultants and will only run the show when our permanent consultants from Paris and London tell us that it is okay in every respect.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRABORTY : Sir, I do not want to enter into the political aspect of the answer that he has given. I want to know... *(Interruptions)* I want to know whether because of your decision to run the railway in the middle of the stretch you excavated the opening to get the bogies and other equipments in and kept the

opening unguarded through which water rushed inside. If that is so whether your decision again to run the railway on the stretch you promised, you would not run the railway without taking the expert opinion and until and unless you are hundred per cent sure that there is no danger to the traffic. That you have to assure the House.

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : Mr. Speaker, sir, I have already said and would like to assure each Member of the House that the Metro railway will not run unless we are assured from abroad by our experts that this is the time you can run the show only then we will do that.

With regard to the question that the hon. Member has raised as to whether the bunds or the openings were strong enough, that is where we are going into the details and only after obtaining details I will tell them. I am not in a position to tell them now.

SHRI SATYASADHAN CHAKRABORTY : Then why you blame the water logging and sewerage system ?

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY : I blame it because Mr. Bonnet has said this in his report. *(Interruptions)* Sir, the problem is that the hon. Member opposite would not like to call a spade a spade.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : The Question Hour is over.

#### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Train Collision Near Howrah on  
21.5.1984

\*62. SHRI CHHOTAY SINGH YADAV : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :