

(b) the grants given?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. P. Jain): (a) and (b). The State Government has asked for a provision of Rs. 13.80 lakhs including the Central and State share. The full amount has been approved. Out of this, the Government of India will provide a sum of Rs. 5.88 lakhs (Rs. 5.04 lakhs as loan and Rs. 0.84 lakhs as grant). The balance will be provided by the State Government as their share.

12 hrs.

DEATH OF SHRI S. K. BANERJEA

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House of the sad demise of Shri Santosh Kumar Banerjea, who was a sitting member of this House from Cooch-Behar constituency of West Bengal. He died at his residence in Calcutta on Sunday night at the age of 53.

Shri Banerjea took a special interest in industries, especially tea industry and was also representing Lok Sabha on the Tea Board. He also took keen interest in Red Cross work.

We mourn the loss of Shri S. K. Banerjea and I am sure the House will join me in conveying our condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

The House may stand in silence for a minute to express its sorrow.

(The Members then stood in silence for a minute.)

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT

EXPLOSION OF AMMUNITION AT PATHANKOT RAILWAY SIDING

Mr. Speaker: I have received notices of four adjournment motions from Shri Ram Sevak Yadav, Shri S. M. Banerjee, Shri U. L. Patil and

Shri Braj Raj Singh. The first one reads:

"The situation created by accident at Pathankot Railway siding which resulted in death of many persons and loss to property."

All of them relate to the explosion at Pathankot railway siding. I have received a letter from the office of the Defence Minister, from Shri Venkateswaran, Under Secretary, stating:

"It is reported that a serious explosion has taken place at Pathankot today. The Defence Minister wishes to make a statement regarding it in the Lok Sabha on the 25th February 1958" (that is, today). "In order to obtain first hand information, he is flying to Pathankot at 6 a.m. and is expected to be back by 12-30 on 25th February 1958. He will make a statement soon after his return from Pathankot."

This is the information I have received.

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Ferozabad): This explosion took place in a railway siding. There were some explosions before also and many lives have been lost. So, this is very important. Will the hon. Railway Minister also attend to this matter?

The Minister of Railways (Shri Jagjivan Ram): May I say that I ascertained the position and I find that the Railway Ministry is not concerned with this matter because the entire loading and unloading and handling of this thing is done by Defence Ministry themselves. So, the statement will be made by my colleague, the Defence Minister.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): May I submit that the *Times of India* has reported that out of 40 people, 31 are civilians and 9 service personnel? This happened at the railway siding;

that is what it says. Is it not the responsibility of the Railway Ministry?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: No. The siding is maintained by the railways. But it is a defence siding, and the handling of these stores is done by the army themselves. Of course, civilian labour has to be engaged by them. They cannot do everything entirely by themselves. But it is done by the Defence Ministry.

Mr. Speaker: I am not disposing of this now. We shall wait until the hon. Minister returns. Let us see what actually has happened.

DEATH OF AND INJURY TO ARMY PERSONNEL DURING FIRING TRAINING AT AMBALA

Mr. Speaker: There is another adjournment motion by Shri Braj Raj Singh. That also relates to the Defence Ministry. It reads:

"Failure of the Army authorities at Ambala to take adequate precautions and safety measures during training at the firing ranges in the evening of February 22nd, as a result of which explosion took place, resulting in the death of three army personnel and injuries to two."

But for the fact that there were three reported deaths I would not have read it here. I would like to know what actually has happened.

The Deputy Minister of Defence (Sardar Majithia): Mr. Speaker, during the normal training of the army personnel, field firing exercises take place. After the firing is complete, then the team goes out to check up if there are any shells which have not exploded. It was during the course of this check-up that one of the shells exploded while people were near about it. That is all the facts that we have got with us at the moment.

Shri Braj Raj Singh: (Ferozabad): I want to know why precautions were not taken. Because of that, three lives have been lost

Mr. Speaker: In trying to find out whether some shells have exploded or not, in the matter of checking up, they have got exploded. That is the difficulty. The House would like to know what precautions have been taken.

Sardar Majithia: So far as precautions are concerned, clear orders have been laid down by the Army Headquarters . . .

Shri Braj Raj Singh: They are not followed.

Mr. Speaker: Let there be no interruption.

Sardar Majithia: . . . which are followed. But accidentally it happened. I am very sorry for this accident. From the information available, I take it that this is not due to the negligence on the part of army people. It is just one of the accidents that occasionally take place. I am very sorry. We are deeply grieved for the people who died as a result of this explosion.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): May I know whether any compensation has been paid to them?

Mr. Speaker: Not so soon. We are more concerned with the deaths.

Shri Asoka Mehta (Muzaffarpur): Can we not have a fuller statement? The information is rather inadequate.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. I have also received two Calling Attention Notices under rule 197 from two hon. Members, Shri Vajpayee and Shri S. M. Banerjee for answer on the 26th, that is, tomorrow. Of course, tomorrow is a little too early. The hon. Minister may make a fuller statement regarding this day after tomorrow.

Sardar Majithia: As you wish; your wishes will be carried out. I would like to have a couple of days more. I will do it as soon as possible, within the next three days.

Mr. Speaker: We will have it on 28th We are sitting on that day.