

(c) whether the matter has been enquired into and corrective steps has been taken to check such incidents in future;

(d) whether the vehicles are damaged while towing them away;

(e) if so, the steps taken not to let such damages in future; and

(f) the reasons for the Police not owing all the cranes and taking them on hire?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (c) A constable was present on the spot from where the car was towed away. The girl, it is reported, escaped attention of the constable, as the car had dark tinted glass windows which hampered a clear view of what was there inside the car. The constable has been placed under suspension. He was supposed to accompany the crane to the Defence Colony Police Station. The crane in question has been black-listed and removed from further duty. All Traffic Inspectors have been briefed about the incident. They have been advised to ensure that crane operations are carried out in the presence of Zonal Officer and a Traffic Constable is invariably seated in the crane when it tows a vehicle away.

(d) and (e) The cases of damage to vehicles during towing operations are rare. However, if a vehicle is damaged during such operations, the crane owner is asked to get the same repaired. Crane owners have been advised to take proper precautions while towing away vehicles.

(f) The Delhi Traffic Police has 9 cranes of its own. Private cranes are hired to meet the actual requirement.

Bomb Blasts in Delhi

393. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA:
SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether following a powerful car bomb blast at Lajpat Nagar central market in South Delhi a number of

persons were killed and shops were gutted in fire;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the number of bomb blasts in the city since January, 1996 and the number of persons killed;

(c) the outcome of the investigations made into the bomb blasts stating the arrests, if any, made in this connection;

(d) the measures taken by Government in the matter; and

(e) the compensation paid to the nearest kith and kin of the victims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (c) During the year 1996 (upto 30.6.1996), there have been two cases of bomb blast in Delhi, one on 3.1.1996 in Sadar Bazar and the other on 21.5.1996 in the Central Market, Lajpat Nagar.

Seven persons were killed and thirty six persons were injured in the bomb blast in Sadar Bazar on 3.1.1996. Four scooters, one motorcycle, on TSR, two rickshaws, one Rehri, one hand cart, five cycles and five shops were also damaged. One persons has been arrested in connection with this case. The case is pending trial.

Fourteen persons were killed, thirty eight persons were injured and 24 shops/ buildings and eight vehicles were damaged in the bomb blast in the Central Market, Lajpat Nagar on 21.5.1996. Eight persons have been arrested in connection with this case.

There was another incident during 1996 i.e. on 20.4.1996 in which a four-storeyed building housing a guest house in Paharganj collapsed killing seventeen persons and injuring thirty one others. There is a difference of opinion among the experts so far as the cause of this collapse is concerned. The Delhi Police is taking action to obtain the opinion of another expert to resolve the issue.

(d) Among the steps taken to check the recurrence of such incidents are formation of an Anti-Terrorist Cell in

each police district, deployment of armed pickets at vulnerable/strategic points; intensive mobile patrolling; larger deployment of spotters/watchers; display of photos of known terrorists at public places; greater coordination for intelligence gathering with other agencies and States and soliciting public cooperation. Police personnel are being trained in counter-insurgency measures.

(e) The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi has sanctioned ex-gratia relief of Rs. 50,000/- for the next of kin of each deceased in the bomb blasts at Sadar Bazar and Lajpat Nagar.

Delay in setting up of overhauling facility for MIG 29

394. SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been considerable delay in setting up overhauling facilities for MIG 29 fighter aircraft within the country resulting in heavy loss to the exchequer;

(b) if so, the steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government for initiating the indigenisation project;

(c) whether any guidelines have been finalised for procurement of spares and other consumables; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Setting up of indigenous facilities for MIG 29 aircraft overhaul is progressing as per schedule. Two MIG 29 aircraft have already been inducted for overhaul in April and June, 1996 as per schedule.

(c) and (d) Necessary guidelines have been finalised for procurement of spares and consumables and are being followed. Contracts for supply of a spares and consumables for the overhaul of an initial batch of 10 aircraft, to be procured as per recommendations of the manufacturer, have been signed. Further requirements

to be computed on the basis of actual assumption of spares for these aircraft.

Streamlining the Working of Passport Offices in Maharashtra

395. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the steps government have taken or propose to take to streamline the working and modernisation of passport offices in the state of Maharashtra particularly in Mumbai; and

(b) the steps taken by Government to reduce delay in issuing of Passports?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) Government's focus has been on streamlining the working and strengthening the infrastructure of all the Passport Offices including those in the state of Maharashtra. The specific measures taken in regard to the Passport Offices in Maharashtra and particularly at Mumbai include application of improved computer technology to ensure expeditious receipt of verification reports from the State Government authorities introduction of a tele-inquiry system which enables a passport applicant to check the status of his/her application without having to pay a visit to the Passport Office, installation of a fax machine and improving the public facilities in the Passport Office.

(b) Proper and thorough scrutiny of passport application forms at acceptance stage itself; better and close co-ordination with concerned state authorities with a view to getting verification reports expeditiously, generating greater awareness among people about rules and procedures and documentation required to be submitted with the passport application, periodic review of policy and procedures, redressal of public grievances, periodic review of staffing requirements, upgrading of office equipment on an ongoing basis are some of the measures introduced to reduce delays in issue of passports.