

ram. If they come in majority, we will have no objection. Let Shri Vajpayee Ji also have a first-hand knowledge of Shri Lalghenda. We are viewing the implementation of the Accord with keenest interest and with all attention. We will see that this Accord is implemented in toto. As regards other accords, whether it is Punjab Accord or Assam Accord, I will be willing to have a discussion if the hon. Members so desire. We are open to this House and the other House. We are open to the guidance by this House. I thank the hon. Members who have participated. After the clarification, I hope Shri Vajpayee Ji will also join me in welcoming the Accord in the best interest of the country and for the strength and unity of the people and the country and also for the integrity of the country. I hope BJP will not lag behind in complimenting the Government and especially the Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi for having signed this Accord.

Collision between 28 up Gorakhpur-Hatia Express and BPTG goods train at Gomoh Station of Eastern Railway on 21st July, 1986

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): Sir, I deeply regret to apprise the House of an unfortunate collision between 28 up Gorakhpur-Hatia Maurya Express and a goods train at Gomoh Junction of Eastern Railway at 5.23 hours today. As a result of this collision as per the information received so far, 9 passengers lost their lives and 19 sustained injuries. 16 of the injured have been taken to railway hospital at Dhanbad and the three others were permitted to resume their journey

after medical attention. *Prima facie* the collision is reported to have occurred due to the driver of the goods train having overshot stop signals. The Driver has been immediately placed under suspension.

Medical relief van was immediately made available and the railway doctors at Gomoh rushed to the site and attended to the injured. In addition, a medical team from Dhanbad also rushed to the site by road.

Divisional officers from Dhanbad and General Manager, Eastern Railway, accompanied by Senior officers and Commissioner of Railway Safety, Eastern Circle, have rushed to the site from Calcutta.

Ex-gratia payments to the next of the kin of the dead and those injured are being arranged. Necessary arrangements are being made to clear the stranded passengers of 28 Up Express.

This accident will be enquired into by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Eastern Circle. On receipt of the enquiry report action would be taken against those held responsible for causing this collision.

श्री रामचन्द्र विकल : (उत्तर प्रदेश) : श्रीमन्, हिन्दी में स्टेटमेंट नहीं है। जब भी स्टेटमेंट मांगते हैं तो प्रायः हिन्दी में नहीं होती जब कि मैं बराबर कहला रहता हूँ। हिन्दी की यह उपेक्षा इस सदन में नहीं होनी चाहिए।

श्री माधवराव सिंधिया : इसके लिये मैं क्षमाप्रार्थी हूँ अभी अभी जानकारी मिली है, अभी तैयार करके लाया हूँ। इसकी लिए मैं क्षमा प्रार्थी हूँ। आगे से ऐसा नहीं होगा।

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY (Tamil Nadu): Sir, we appreciate Mr. Scindia who understands our feelings.

श्री राम अवधेय सिंह : आपने अफसरों का मन बिगाड़ दिया है। वे अंग्रेजी में ही

[श्री राम अवधेश सिंह]

आपको दोगे । अगर उनका मन बना रहना तो आपको तो उन्होंने हिन्दो में ही देना चाहिए था ।

श्री आधवराव तिसीधया : आनरेबल सदस्य से मैं फिर से माफी मांगता हूँ । अभी मैं नई दिल्ली रेलवे स्टेशन से आ रहा हूँ, अभी 20 मिनट पहले मैं आया हूँ.....
(व्यवधान)

This is a very tragic situation. Let us concentrate on the tragedy, on the unfortunate incident that has happened rather than divert our attention to other issues.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI M. P. KAUSHIK) : Now, Smt. Sushila Rohatgi.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Sir, on a point of order. Are we not permitted to seek clarifications on the statement made by the Railway Minister ?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI M. P. KAUSHIK) : He has already explained. He has just come from the station. Whenever he gets the complete information, he will give.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Sir this is the procedure whenever a statement is made, the Member can seek clarifications.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA : I am prepared to give clarifications that the hon. Members would like to ask.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, in his statement, the Railway Minister has stated that the collision is reported to have occurred due to the driver of the goods train having overshoot the stop signals. Sir, we have requested the Railway Minister many times that the demands of the running staff, particularly of the drivers should be considered because they are put to overwork. And because of the strain of overwork, this type of accidents

take place. So, after this, will the Railway Minister take into consideration most of the demands of the running staff, particularly of the drivers who have to work for more than eight hours or 10 hours or 12 hours and because of which such accidents take place ? I would also like to know whether the Railway Minister will make a trip to the accident site to expedite the relief work.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal) : Sir, while expressing my deep sorrow and sympathy for the bereaved families and for those who have died, I would like to seek a clarification from the hon. Minister of State for Railways.

Nowdays Railway accidents have become a very regular phenomenon. I remember during the last session while participating in another debate and while participating in a debate of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Railways, I had drawn the attention of the Ministers—at that time there was another Minister also—to this ominous development. We are having accidents every now and then in different parts of the country and most of the accidents are taking place also in the eastern region. In my opinion it is because the security and safety regulations are being mercilessly violated by the railway administration. It is very easy to issue a statement holding a poor driver responsible. I do not know, he may be responsible. But the practice of the railway management and the practice of the Government is to pass over the responsibility to the poor railway workers, put them under suspension and do whatever they like. But the point is this that there have been occasions where the safety and security regulations have been violated by the management at the highest level, not at the lowest level. There have been occasions when the signalling system went wrong on several occasions. There have been occasions when engines which were not fit to run were put on the track by the railway administration. I ask the hon. Mi-

nister, while expressing my sympathy for him also, I express my sympathies for those who are dead, to tell me whether priority is going to be given to the question of security and safety on the Indian railways and whether he is going to give serious look at this problem.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA (Andhra Pradesh) : Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I would like to associate myself with the sympathies for those who are dead. The Minister has stated that ex-gratia payments to the next of kin of those who are dead and injured are being arranged. I would like to know what are the amounts that are being paid to the next of the kin of the dead and those who are injured. Are these amounts sufficient to meet their immediate requirements under the circumstances ? Thank you.

SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY (Andhra Pradesh) : Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by other Members for those who are dead and those who are injured in the railway accident. With regard to those who have been killed, I would like to know from the Minister one point. These accidents are taking place very often. Recently we have read in the press that there was an accident between a bullock cart and a moving train. Similarly there was another accident between a bus and a train. Such accidents are taking place very often and especially on unmanned level crossings. May I know from the hon. Minister what steps are being taken by the Government and the railway administration to prevent such accidents ? Whenever an accident takes place the Minister comes here with a statement but that is not sufficient. We want to know what concrete steps the Government is taking to prevent such accidents.

SHRI DIPEN GOSH (West Bengal) : Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I want to seek a clarification on one

point which has been referred to in the statement of the Minister of State for railways. It has been mentioned and I quote : "*Prima facie*, the collision is reported to have occurred due to the driver of the goods train having overshot the stop signals. The driver has been immediately placed under suspension." I want to know who had reported this to the disciplinary authority of the driver concerned that the driver had overshot the stop signals. And whether before placing the driver under suspension on the ground of such report that he had overshot the stop signals whether any investigation or examination had been made that his overshooting the stop signals, was due to the failure of the brakes or due to human failures ?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA :

I more than share the anguish of the House on the occurrence of this very tragic accident. It has been our endeavour since April 1985 to give rail safety utmost priority and to keep the interest of rail safety supreme, above all other interests in the working of the then Railway Ministry, now Railway Department. Under the former Railway Minister, a ten-point safety plan and an action plan had also been instituted and it was 'put into operation with great vigour which included things like safety guidance, safety counselling, creating safety consciousness, discussions, seminars, at all levels not just at senior levels but right down the levels to our man on the spot who has to deal with the situation and slowly this seemed to have been bearing results. I had said in my reply to the Railway budget a few months ago that there has been a significant improvement in the matter of railway accidents in the year 1985-86 as compared to the year 1984-85 but I had also added as a note of caution that it was too early for us in the Railway Department to claim credit for it because it may be that there is a hand of God also which is involved. Therefore, I had said very clearly in my budget speech that before I

[Shri Madhavrao Scindia]

start claiming credit for the Railway Department, I would like to watch the situation a little further and only when the trend continues, will I say that yes, some effect has taken place, and there is a significant improvement because of the safety measures we have taken.

Sir, an hon. Member just said that the Railway staff is always responsible for these accidents and there is no improvement, and proportion of the accidents attributable to the negligence of Railway staff is increasing day by day. I am afraid, figures do not bear that out. I am very glad to inform the House that in the year 1985-86 compared to 1984-85, as far as accidents attributable to Railway staff are concerned, in spite of the fact that total kilometrage done by Indian Railways in that particular year has gone up by 14 per cent compared to previous year, the proportion attributable to Railway staff has fallen by 12 per cent. So there seems to have been a consciousness created amongst the staff amongst the officers, amongst the general workers of the Railway system and I feel a certain amount of credit certainly is due to them.

As far as Railway accidents are concerned, I can quite understand the heated and emotional way in which the hon. Member gave vent to his views. I can understand because after all this is an unfortunate situation when emotions are roused. But again I am afraid I do not take refuge behind them because in cases of such a tragedy, quoting figures is really something which is very cold and clinical. But since it has been raised that Railway accidents are going up every year, I am inform the hon. House that Railway accidents in 1963-64 were 1635; in 1981-82 it came down to 1130; in 1984-85, it was 812 and this year, the number has been the lowest ever recorded in Indian Railways; it is 717 which is a drop of almost 12

per cent, in spite of kilometrage having gone up. So there has been some improvement and as I said in my budget speech, I would like to go into the next financial year before starting to give credit to Railway officers and staff. But I am glad to inform the House that in the quarter April-May and June of this year, compared to the quarter last year—a year which was the lowest ever on Indian Railways as far as Railway accidents are concerned—there has been a 30 per cent improvement. This shows that the position is improving. Where there were 219 accidents, they have come down to 159. Again, Sir, I feel very awkward, I feel very embarrassed to quote these figures, in an emotional moment like this, in the context of a tragic accident like this. In a situation like this, where a family has lost a husband or a daughter or a son, figures offer no consolation. But since these matters were raised, I thought I would just put the record straight.

Then, Sir, as far as the payment of *ex-gratia* is concerned, as hon. Members already know, this payment is made for immediate expenses. Last year, it was something like, if I am not mistaken, Rs. 1500 for those who lost their dear ones, Rs. 750 in the case of those grievously injured and Rs. 250 in the case of simple injuries, where they are discharged immediately. We have now increased these amounts and now these are: Rs. 5,000 in the case of death, Rs. 1000 in the case of grievous injuries and Rs. 250 in the case of simple injuries—this remains the same because they are more or less scratches and bruises, where they are discharged immediately, on the spot. We have increased this. But this should not be confused with the compensation amount. In the case of compensation, a Claims Commissioner is appointed in consultation with the State Government. The Claims Commissioner then sits and decides on the claims put forward to him by various parties because there may be a number of successors involved. Whatever instructions he gives us, we just pay the

compensation. It is a quasi-legal process. Therefore, it does take time because there may be a number of contestants for succession.

As far as unmanned level-crossings are concerned, it is a fact that the onus of responsibility is entirely on the road user. It is the road user who has a whole set of schedules to follow before he crosses an unmanned railway crossing. But there are people who do not observe these things. In the case of a bus or a truck, the clearer is supposed to get down, get the bus or the truck to cross and then get back into the bus. Sometimes, these regulations are not observed. Sometimes, unfortunately, accidents do happen. Take, for example, bullock-carts. Somebody mentioned this. They just cross the railway line even where there are no manned or unmanned level-crossings. But I am including all accidents, even those where it is not the responsibility of the railways. These are unfortunate things where I feel, possibly, some sort of a public education campaign or some co-ordination with the local authorities who can carry out this sort of campaign will help. As far as unmanned level-crossing accidents and track crossing accidents are concerned, hon. Members would be surprised to know that in advanced countries like the U.S.A. and Japan, the number is more than ours. Now, I am not trying to take refuge behind this. There is a lot of scope for improvement in the safety performance of the Indian Railways. We have achieved an all-time low. But our aim is to achieve an all-time lower. Therefore, there is scope for constant improvement and I am not taking refuge behind these figures.

As far as the question by the hon. Member is concerned, as to who reported that the driver overshot the stop signal, I will crave the indulgence of the hon. Member. I do not have the complete information yet. It is a *prima facie* report. I will try to get back to you in the evening if I could get the information by then. As soon as I get the information, I will be able to

tell you what exact procedures were followed. Every single detail will be given to you.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Now, you asked the Safety Commissioner to enquire into the accident and fix up responsibility. In the meantime, you have suspended the driver on the basis of the *prima facie* report that he had overshot the signal. I would like to know whether this act of the driver in overshooting the signal was due to human failure or engine brake failure. As you know, in the goods trains also, there are defective brakes. We have seen such instances when we travel even in the case of Rajdhani Express. Now, on the basis of the *prima facie* report only, pending an enquiry by the Safety Commissioner, you have suspended the driver and you are reporting it to Parliament. I would like to know who gave the *prima facie* report to the disciplinary authority and before suspending the driver, whether the disciplinary authority satisfied himself that it was only due to human failure and not brake failure?

4 P.M.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Hon. Member's question is extremely pertinent. I understand the thrust of it and I have just been informed that the brake was found to be satisfactory. But there may be other aspects of the matter. I will enquire into this aspect of the accident and I will personally communicate to you as soon as I get the information. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, the Indian Electricity (Amendment) Bill.

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA (Uttar Pradesh): What about Supplementary Item No. 4—Minister to make a statement on the Commonwealth Games.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We will have it later.