

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Sir, from my long experience in this House and the other House, I would say, very often it happens that from the Minister's reply, certain new aspects emerge. If you shut that out and say you can only go to the original question, then, very often, my experience has been that from the replies given by the Minister, a lot of new aspects arise. Are you cutting those out totally? Because, if so, then, Sir, it would be an innovative procedure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The point of reference is the question, the original question. ...*(Interruptions)*... No; please, we are not having a discussion on this. Question No. 281, Prof. Kurien is not here. Any supplementaries? Yes, Mr. Prasanta Chatterjee.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*281 [The Questioner (Shri P.J. Kurien) was absent]

Train Accidents

*281. PROF. P. J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of train accidents which occurred in the last one year;
- (b) whether it is a fact that the number of accidents and casualties are higher during the last one year than the previous years;
- (c) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether Railways have reduced the amount spent for railway safety over the years;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) whether any special steps are being taken to prevent such accidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (f)
A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) The number of consequential train accidents, i.e., collisions, derailments, manned level crossing gate accidents, fire in train and other miscellaneous accidents during 2009-10 and the current year from April to July 2010, is as under:

Type of Accident	2009-2010	2010-2011 (April - July 2010)
Collisions	9	2
Derailments	80	22
Manned Level Crossing Gate Accidents	5	1
Fire in Train	2	1
Miscellaneous	4	-
TOTAL	100	26

These figures do not include incidents of trespassing by road users at unmanned level crossings.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. The number of consequential train accidents excluding the cases of trespassing by road users at unmanned level crossings has reduced from 115 in the year 2008-09 to 100 in the year 2009-10. The number of casualties has also reduced during the year 2009-10 as compared to the previous year 2008-09. The details of loss of human lives in consequential train accidents other than incidents of trespassing by road users at unmanned level crossings during 2008-09, 2009-10 and the current year from April to July 2010, are as under:-

Type of Accident	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11 (April to July, 2010)
Collisions	9	42	Nil*
Derailments	10	14	1*
Manned Level Crossing gate accidents	18	7	1
Fire in Train	31	Nil	Nil
Miscellaneous	12	1	Nil
TOTAL	80	64	2*

* This figure does not include deaths in following three unfortunate incidents:

(i) In the incident of derailment and collision of Jnaneshwari Express on 28.05.2010 in Kharagpur Division due to sabotage, 150 persons lost their lives, (ii) One person died due to derailment of Guwahati Kolkata Garib Rath on 08.07.2010 in Kokrajhar district of Assam due to sabotage, (iii) 65 persons lost their lives in the incident of rear-end collision of Uttar Banga Express with Varananchal Express on 19.07.2010 at Sainthia station, which is under investigation from all possible angles. Ministry of Railways has also asked for an enquiry by Central Bureau of Investigation into this incident.

(d) and (e) No, Sir. Expenditure on works related to safety has increased from Rs. 27,150 crore in 2008-09 to 30,656 crore in 2009-10 and in the Budget Estimates of 2010-11, a provision of Rs. 31,616 crore has been made for these works.

(f) Safety is accorded the highest priority by Indian Railways and all possible steps are undertaken on a continuing basis by the Railways to enhance safety. These include timely replacement of over-aged assets, adoption of suitable technologies for upgradation and maintenance of track, rolling stock, signaling and interlocking systems, safety drives, greater emphasis on training of officials and inspections at regular intervals to monitor and educate staff for observance of safe practices. Safety devices introduced to prevent accidents include provision of Anti-collision Device (ACD), Train Protection and Warning System (TPWS), Block Proving Axle Counters (BPAC), Auxiliary Warning System (AWS), LED Signals and Vigilance Control Device (VCD), etc.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Sir, in the reply of the hon. Minister, it is said that the number of casualties during April-July, 2010 was 218 as compared to 80 and 64 during the previous years. Sir, there are 90,000 vacancies in safety category alone. Nowadays, there is the problem of detachment; sometime the engine getting detached or sometimes the bogies getting detached. Those figures are not here.

Sir, on 19th July, 65 persons lost their lives and 91 injured in an incident of rear-end collision of Uttar Banga Express with Varananchal Express. But, strangely, before any formal enquiry was ordered, the Chairman Railway Board at the accident site itself said "There was something definitely wrong with the driver." He also speculated and said "he may have been unconscious or fallen asleep and any conclusion must wait till the post-mortem report is arrived."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question, please.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Sir, I am coming to the question. The post-mortem gave no indication, according to media, of such apprehension. Now, the Railway Minister on 6th August, 2010 said here that the cause of the accident is being enquired from all angles. My question is,

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is exactly what I was. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Sir, my question is, whether the Chairman of the Railway Board will be cautioned or has been cautioned for making such unfounded, confusing and irresponsible statement blaming the driver who reportedly had unblemished track record and who died on the spot itself. So, this is my straight question to the Minister. I want to know whether the Chairman of the Railway Board will be cautioned for making such inhuman statement.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, the hon. Member must be aware that there was not one, but three such incidents; one, involving the Jnaneshwari Express, another involving the Uttarbanga Express and a third at Kokrajhar involving Guwahati-Kolkata Garib Rath. The hon. Member is referring to the incident that occurred at Sainthia station. ...*(Interruptions)*... I am coming to that. I have got with me all the facts and figures; I can read it out. But I don't agree with the hon. Member when he says that the Chairman of the Railway Board had exceeded his limits. It was also his duty to inform the Press and media, especially when the Ministers are not there, or even at the instruction of the Minister. But here, hon. Member talks about the accident and the subsequent steps taken. Even in the main question, I have already stated the steps that Government has taken. If the hon. Member so wishes, with your permission, Sir, I would like to give a little elaboration on this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is mentioned in the reply need not be repeated.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, I would like to say that we have taken action. The first incident was due to sabotage; in the second incident also, sabotage was suspected; the third incident is under investigation by the Railway Safety Commissioner, but the circumstances were quite mysterious, puzzling and intriguing. It is the duty of the Railways to make a thorough investigation into the incident. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. Please, no discussion on this topic. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Sir, the question has not been answered. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Why was the driver. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a minute, please. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, how can he. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Sir, the Minister had made that statement. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Sir, it was said that the driver was drunk and that caused the accident. The post-mortem has nullified that statement.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, I have replied to the question that was asked. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: How could the Railway Board Chairman. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: How can he say. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: How can you intervene in this discussion? A supplementary question has been asked and it is being answered. You don't have a locus in the matter. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: When the Minister replies, it becomes the property of the whole House. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, I would like to say one thing here. Whatever the Chairman has observed has not been contradicted by the Railways. Therefore, whatever the Chairman has said, it is the view of the Railways. What is wrong?

The Chairman is also an authority competent to speak on behalf of the Railways. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: The question is, how could he make such a statement? ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: What is this? ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Prasanta Chatterjee, please. Shri Shreegopal Vyas.

श्री श्रीगोपाल व्यास : सभापति जी, एक रेल दुर्घटना के बाद माननीय रेल मंत्री जी ने कहा था कि इसके पीछे कुछ संगठनों, जिसमें राजनीतिक दल का भी नाम लिया गया था, उसका हाथ है। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या उसकी जांच हुई है?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Mr. Chairman, Sir, that is why I have said that the Railways wish to make a thorough enquiry into everything. The Chairman, Railway Board had made his observations on the basis of the information he had at that time. We are awaiting the report of the Safety Commissioner. If hon. Chairman permits me, I would like to give details. But it is already mentioned in reply to the first question and therefore, I am not going into that. If any hon. Member would like to know about the incident involving the Jnaneshwari Express or the Uttarbanga or any other incident, I am willing to give whatever information I have.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, the reply details the following possible steps being taken to enhance safety: replacement of over-aged assets, adoption of suitable technologies for upgradation and maintenance of track, rolling stock, signaling and interlocking systems, safety drives, greater emphasis on training of officials and inspections at regular intervals to monitor and educate staff for observation of safe practice. Sir, the CAG report on Railways has stated that maintenance and inspections were to be the cornerstones for ensuring efficient functioning of railway equipment. Studies have indicated that there was a need to review this aspect, as in all zones there was shortfall in inspections. Staff shortage was a commonly cited reason for this shortfall.

Contrary to the pronouncement of the Corporate Safety Plan, in all the 16 zones there are shortage of safety category staff. In the light of the CAG Report on Railways, what exactly does the Government intend to do to fill up the vacant posts related to railway safety? Will the Ministry come out with a time-frame for the same?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am thankful to the hon. Member for mentioning what are the steps to be taken by the Railways for the railway safety. I would like to say that there is absolutely no compromise so far as safety of the railway is concerned. Regarding the CAG Report, I do not want to make any observation here because there is a procedure for it. It is presented in the

Parliament and then it is sent to the concerned Department. If it is the case of the Railways, it is sent to the Railway Ministry and then the Railways will give its official reply. But here I would like to say that Railways spent Rs.27,160 crore for railway safety in 2008-09, Rs.30,656 crore in 2009-10 and this year the allocation is Rs.31,616 crore. It shows that the Railways is providing more money for the safety, I would also like to add with your kind permission, Sir, that accidents due to failure of railway staffs have been reduced from 248 in 2001-02 to 75 in 2008-09 and 66 in 2009-10. Again, Sir, the Railways gives the highest priority to safety in train operation. Consequential train accidents excluding cases of trespassing unmanned level crossing in India have consistently declined from 269 in 2002-03 to 100 in 2009-10. Accidents in 2009-10 registered a decline of 13 per cent in comparison to previous year.

Price-rise of essential commodities

*282.SHRI BHARATSINH PRABHATSINH PARMAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the prices of essential commodities have been rising in the recent months;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) the corrective measures taken/proposed to be taken by Government to contain food inflation/prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) The retail prices of essential commodities are showing a declining or steady trend over the past 6 months in the case of rice, wheat, atta, sugar, pulses such as gram dal, tur dal, masoor dal, edible oils such as mustard oil, onion in 4 metros viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. However the retail prices of pulses such as urad dal and moong dal, edible oils such as groundnut oil and vanaspati, milk and potato had shown a marginal increase over the same period. The details of retail prices of essential commodities in 4 Metros viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai is given in Statement-I (See below).