

\*185. [The question (DR. MANOHAR JOSHI) was absent 52].

**Increase in fire incidents in Army ordnance depots**

\*185. DR. MANOHAR JOSHI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of unprecedented increase in the incidents of fire in Army ordnance depots;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the quantum and value of ammunition destroyed and loss of lives and property in each case during the last three years, separately;
- (c) whether Government has conducted any inquiry into each incident separately;
- (d) if so, the details of the findings of each inquiry;
- (e) the action taken and the extent to which affected civilians have been compensated by Government; and
- (f) the measures taken/proposed to be taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents and to safeguard the interests of civilians?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU):

(a) to (f) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

***Statement***

1. Only two of fire incidents in the Army Ordnance/Ammunition Depots have taken place during the past three years:—
  - (a) On 26.3.2010 a fire incident took place in Ammunition Depot (AD), Panagarh, West Bengal, in which approximately 332 MTs of ammunition worth Rs. 18 crores was destroyed. There was no loss of life in the incident.
  - (b) On 20.11.2010, a fire incident took place in Ammunition Point (AP), Binaguri, West Bengal, in which approximately 19 MTs of unserviceable ammunition/portion of two rooms Explosive store house were damaged. There has been no loss of life in the incident.
2. A Staff Court of Inquiry has been ordered in both the cases by GOC-in-C HQ Eastern Command.
3. The measures which have been taken in order to avoid recurrence of such incidents in future are as under:—
  - (i) All Depots have updated Security and safety instructions.
  - (ii) All depots have been inspected by the Board of Officers to check adequacy of fire safety and security arrangements.

- (iii) 349 trucks for fire fighting have been provided to the units.
- (iv) Unserviceable ammunition is being disposed off on priority.
- (v) Rs. 1736 crores have been sanctioned since 1999 for ammunition storage accommodation.

Modernization of Army Ordnance depots including improvement of safety and security instructions is an on-going process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Q. No. 185. Shri Sanjay Raut.

SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Sir, this is a question of national security. There is an unprecedented increase in the incidents of fire in Army ordnance depots. The Government has said, in its written reply, that they have conducted inquiries. My supplementary to the hon. Minister is very simple. What is the finding of the inquiry into the incident that took place in West Bengal? And, is there any chance that the Maoists were behind this incident?

SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU: If you look at the number of incidents that has taken place, there have been only two incidents in the last three years, and the probable causes of fire in ordnance establishments, looking at each of these 11 incidents that have happened over the last ten years, are spontaneous combustion or electronic short circuit or accidental exposure during testing, repairs or breakdown of ammunition. As far as this specific incident is concerned, there was no incident of sabotage or involvement by an external non-State actor.

SHRI V.P. SINGH BADNORE: Sir, the Court of Inquiry into such incidents before has also revealed that there are shortages, and because of shortages, they do it on purpose so that the inventories are all lost. That is why they do it, and this has been the fact. In these two inquiries also, something like that has come out. Can the hon. Minister kindly give us the information on that?

SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU: Sir, I can tell you that there is a little shortage of space for storage of ammunitions. The present authorization is about 9,15,578 MT, and there is a plan for augmenting the capacity for storage. As soon as the funds are available, the additional storage will be made.

**श्री आर.सी. सिंह:** सर, इन्होंने कहा है कि एक साल पहले 2010 में Court of Enquiry कंडक्ट की गई थी। क्या Court of Enquiry की पूरी रिपोर्ट आई है? कहीं यह man-made तो नहीं था अथवा क्या इस तरह की कोई संभावना है?

SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU: Sir, I have just read out the findings of the Court of Inquiry which has gone into the probable cause of fire in these establishments. And we are also taking remedial measures, that is, some of the safety and security measures, like, forming of three levels of security and also augmenting the capacity for storage.