

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.110
TO BE ANSWERED ON 2ND FEBRUARY, 2021**

DEATH OF INFANTS DUE TO FIRE IN MAHARASHTRA

110 SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA:

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware that several infants were killed after a fire broke out at the neonatal care ward of the district hospital in Maharashtra's Bhandara district recently, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether similar incidents have happened in the past year in other States also, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the funds released to the State Governments for maintaining safety measures are properly utilized by the State Governments; and
- (d) the steps taken by Government to prevent such incidents in future?

**ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND
FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)**

- (a): Yes, The details regarding death of infants due to fire in Maharashtra as informed by the State Government is at Annexure.
- (b): No such incidence of infant death due to fire has been reported in the past year from the States/UTs.
- (c) & (d): Health being a State subject, the primary responsibility of hospital maintenance rests with the States/UTs. Under the National Health Mission, financial and technical support is provided to States/UTs for infrastructure up gradation, gaps and other activities based on the proposals sent by the States/UTs in the Annual Project Implementation Plan (PIP) as per their felt need and requirements.

Guidance and advisories are sent to the States and UTs for implementing quality standards at the public health facilities as per Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS). National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) sets out standards with respect to various parameters such as infrastructure, safety measures including fire safety requirements for the public facilities. NQAS certification is awarded to the public facility on fulfilling these standards.

Details regarding death of infants due to fire in Maharashtra

Incident Summary:

The State has informed that a fire broke out inside Special Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) of Bhandara District Hospital early in the morning on 9th January 2021. The fire was confined to Out-born unit of SNCU ward located on 1st Floor of the hospital building. In this unfortunate incident 10 newborn babies who were admitted in SNCU Out-born unit, died. Seven Newborn babies, admitted in In-born unit, were rescued.

An Enquiry Committee was constituted by Public Health Department of Government of Maharashtra for investigating the incidence. The committee has found that the probable cause of fire may be defective Electric circuit inside the Electronic Control Panel of Radiant Warmer kept near cradle No. 8.

The inquiry committee investigated the incidence on the following lines;

1. Investigation of Cause of Fire and the death of Newborn,
2. Record the facts
3. To ascertain the seat of Fire
4. Review and identify gap analysis in the processes and practices followed in hospital
5. Recommendations of the policies to be adhered by Hospital buildings in future in terms of life safety

Other details:

- 1) **Place of Incident:** Special Newborn Care Unit (SNCU), Bhandara district hospital Bhandara.
- 2) **Date and time of the call when reported to fire brigade control room about the fire:** 09/01/2021 at 01:30 am.
- 3) **Injuries and casualties:** The mishap had occurred during the night shift at about 01:30 am inside SNCU on 1st Floor. There were 10 infants in out-born unit and 07 infants in the inborn unit admitted for the treatment in the SNCU ward. After the fire incident, initial attempts were made to rescue the infants from out-born unit but due to huge smoke and intense heat, attempt to entry in to out-born unit at the very initial stage of fire was not possible. The entry was only gained after arrival of the fire brigade and by pitching the first floor ladder on north side balcony. The 07 infants from in-born unit were rescued immediately and simultaneously ventilation by breaking and opening of the glasses of

windows was carried out and fire was extinguished by fire extinguishers and buckets of water. Later the infants from the out-born units were taken out.

- 4) **The details of casualties:** Out of 10 infants died in out-born unit of SNCU, 8 infants were female and 2 infants were Male.
- 5) **Damage:** Due to heavy smoke and heat, the floor tiles, wall tiles and ceiling were damaged. The walls, ceiling and floor were covered with carbon soot.

Following items were damaged due to the fire

- Furniture and Fixtures
 - Electrical wiring, electrical fixtures, switch boards, split A.C. units and electronic equipment like radiant warmers and photo therapy unit.
 - The poly-urethane foam mattresses with plastic cover.
 - Small quantity of sanitizer (isopropyl alcohol) kept on the cradles.
 - Plastic boxes, medical equipment and medicines
 - Files, records etc. damaged due to fire, heat, smoke and dry chemical powder.
- 6) **Fire containment:** The fire was extinguished by buckets of water and with the use of dry chemical powder extinguishers by firemen and hospital staff.
 - 7) **Probable cause of fire:**

Committee considered and ruled out the various causes of fire such as Spontaneous combustion, Radiation, Chemical reaction, Static electricity, Chimney fire, Dust explosion, Fire crackers, Frictional sparks, Mechanical sparks, Hot Iron left unattended, Overheating & Gas explosion, Spark from Gas welding & cutting plant. There may be possibility of supposed causes of fire such as Naked flame/ light, Hot ashes, Careless smoking, Oxygen therapy, Defective electric circuit, Incendiaries, Arson. These causes were also ruled out.

While all the above mentioned causes are ruled out, the Committee deduced that supposed cause of Fire is "Defective Electric Circuit inside the Electronic Control Panel of Radiant warmer kept near the cradle No.8." But supposed cause arrived at is kept open for any changes in future if any authorized agency puts forth with the reliable evidence subject to the acceptance by fire brigade authority. Also Forensic lab report is awaited.

- 8) **Immediate action taken by the State Government of Maharashtra:**
 - a) Due to lapses in duty the two SNs were terminated
 - b) In charge staff and Paediatrician are suspended

- c) Transfer of ACS (Additional Civil surgeon)
- d) Civil Surgeon of Hospital is suspended for not giving attention to SNCU

9) Other Action Taken by the State Government of Maharashtra:

- a) Enquiry committee has been formed by Public Health Dept. under chairmanship of Director Health Services Mumbai with the members from domain experts of fire safety, disaster management, PWD engineer, bio medical engineer etc.
- b) Public Health Department has issued guidelines to all districts to conduct fire safety audit, electrical audit and medical equipment operation and maintenance of all SNCUs.
- c) Fire department of Maharashtra has been asked to undertake detailed fire safety audit of all hospitals of Maharashtra.
- d) All intuitions instructed to apply for the fire safety NOC and get the fire safety NOC.
- e) All institutions and districts are directed to conduct the fire drill at least once in a year.
