

Budget for Science & Technology

The Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Science Dr. Harsh Vardhan has expressed happiness for increased allocations for various

Shri Kiren Rijiju addresses seminar on 'Indo-Pacific Region: Converging India-Japan interests'

The Minister of State for Home Affairs Shri Kiren Rijiju addresses the seminar on 'Indo-Pacific Region: Converging India-Japan interests', organised by Observer Research Foundation (ORF)

Press release: Report 02/2017: Collision at Plymouth station

Summary

At 15:34 hrs on Sunday 3 April 2016, the 13:39 hrs passenger train service from Penzance to Exeter collided with an empty train which was already waiting in platform 6 at Plymouth station. The collision occurred at a speed of about 15 mph (24 km/h) and resulted in injuries to 48 people and damage to both trains.

The signaller intended that both trains should share the platform because the empty train was to form a service to London and some passengers from the Penzance service were expected to join it. Lift refurbishment work meant that without platform sharing, passengers would have needed to use the stairs and a subway when changing trains. Permissive signalling arrangements were in place at Plymouth to permit two trains to share the same platform.

The signaller misjudged the amount of space available behind the London train and wrongly believed there was room for the Penzance train. He was aware that the platform sharing arrangement required an unusual form of permissive working, but did not communicate this to the Penzance train driver, and the rules did not require him to do so.

The Penzance train driver incorrectly believed he would not be sharing a platform with the London train. There was insufficient distance to stop his train by the time he realised his mistake and had applied the emergency brake.

Great Western Railway, the operator of both trains, and Network Rail the owner of the infrastructure, had not identified the risk of a collision due to the combination of an unusual form of permissive working, the track alignment on the approach to Plymouth station, and an inexperienced driver.

Recommendations

The RAIB has made three recommendations. The first, addressed to Great Western Railway and possibly also relevant to other train operators, seeks improvements to the training and assessment of new drivers. The second, also addressed to Great Western Railway and possibly relevant to other train operators, arises from difficulties encountered during passenger evacuation and seeks improvements to emergency door release controls. The third recommendation, addressed to Network Rail and to be undertaken with the assistance of appropriate train operating companies, seeks a review of permissive working arrangements at stations.

Two learning points stress the care needed by drivers when undertaking permissive moves, and the value of preventing passengers boarding or alighting from trains when permissive movements are taking place in the same platform.

Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

This collision caused great distress to the large numbers of passengers and staff involved, particularly those who suffered injuries. It occurred when a train was routed into a platform that was already occupied by a stationary high speed train. This form of train working, known as permissive platform working is not unusual on the UK's busy network and is usually performed safely. Platform sharing allows trains to be joined together or, as was intended in this case, can facilitate the easy movement of passengers between connecting train services.

This accident reinforces the need for drivers to take great care when signalled into an occupied platform – assumptions should never be made about the length of platform that is unoccupied. This learning applies to all drivers but is particularly applicable to those who are inexperienced or new to a route. For this reason we have today issued a recommendation to Great Western Railway concerning the training and assessment of new drivers to better prepare them for permissive platform working. I am also urging other train operators to think about how well they prepare their drivers for similar circumstances.

Although the RAIB recognises the need for permissive working in

station platforms, we have recommended that Network Rail, in conjunction with train operators, carries out a review of the way it is implemented at all stations where permissive platform working is currently authorised. This should include an assessment of a range of risk factors, including the information provided to the signallers when deciding whether or not to route a train into an occupied platform.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

Newsdate: 13 February 2017

PDF, 6.46MB, 49 pages

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[News story: Berlin Embassy reception for Edinburgh International Film Festival](#)

The British Embassy Berlin this week [10 February 2017] hosted this year's Berlinale reception to celebrate the 70th anniversary year of the Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF).

Scottish Secretary David Mundell and British Ambassador to Germany Sir Sebastian Wood held the event at the embassy for the first time. The reception is key to engaging the world's film industry in Edinburgh's film festival. The EIFF runs from 21 June to 2 July in the city.

David Mundell said:

This is a momentous year for the EIFF, as it celebrates its 70th anniversary. It focuses the world's cinema industry on Scotland, while showcasing some of the most interesting and entertaining films in the world.

I am very pleased that the UK Government hosted EIFF's Berlinale reception at the British Embassy. The world's film industry will be gathered in Berlin, making it a great opportunity to show off this year's EIFF. I hope that many will be able to join us in Edinburgh for the festival in June.

Sir Sebastian Wood said:

This evening we are celebrating two major international film festivals: the Berlinale and the Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF). In its 70th anniversary year, the EIFF will no doubt have a particularly exciting programme on offer this summer. So I am delighted to be able to welcome the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, among our guests here in the Embassy this evening.

It is also great to see Danny Boyle's 'T2 Trainspotting' have its international premiere in Berlin – hopefully the sequel will be just as successful as its predecessor.

Edinburgh's festivals are hugely important in economic terms, as well as putting Scotland and the UK on the international cultural map. In 2015 it was estimated that the Edinburgh festivals generated £313m of additional expenditure in the Scottish economy.

While in Berlin Mr Mundell also met the Aberdeen-based James Hutton Institute at the Fruit Logistica agri show, and met academics from the Freie University to hear about their partnership with Glasgow University.

Mr Mundell was in Berlin on the second day of a two-day programme of European engagements on economic, social and cultural matters.

Green Party: Government has no viable plan for prisons crisis



13 February 2017

The Green Party is calling on the Government to tackle the growing prisons crisis after an undercover BBC investigation discovered chaos in HMP Northumberland, one of the country's largest prisons [1].

Justice Secretary Liz Truss is expected to call the plan to cut prison numbers a 'dangerous quick fix' in a speech to the Centre for Social Justice today [2].

A separate report published today highlighted the rising number of suicides in prisons, the impact of staff shortages and a 'toxic' working environment [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"The Justice Secretary appears to be caught like a rabbit in the headlights. A huge crisis in our prisons is bearing down but there is no viable plan to deal with it.

"Liz Truss has repeatedly ignored the calls for sensible moves to bring prison numbers down to manageable levels. Reducing overcrowding would ease the excessive workload of prison officers, ensure a focus on rehabilitation and help stop the riots, deaths and escapes that are becoming commonplace.

"We're not talking about turfing dangerous criminals out onto the street. We need a long term, common sense approach, including investment in education, youth services and anti-poverty measures to tackle crime at its root, as well as restorative measures to cut reoffending.

"The privatisation of prisons has proved disastrous and profit-focused companies should never have been allowed to take control of such a large part of our justice system. A complete overhaul of our failing prison system is necessary, with all prison services brought back into public hands."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38931580>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/13/liz-truss-rejects-calls-to-cut-sentences-to-reduce-prison-population>
3. <http://home.bt.com/news/uk-news/profound-shift-needed-to-change-trend-on-prison-suicides-11364150503382>

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