

Leh cloud burst and Day light robbers



Extending helping hand to the fellow man who is badly in need of it, is one of the basic human values. However, it is proved beyond doubt recently, when disaster struck Leh, that the profit hungry private companies are bereft of this human value.

Leh is situated at a height of 11,500 feet in the Himalayan region. On 5th night and 6th morning of August, two cloud bursts hit Leh. Sheets of water came down from the sky, as Leh received 48mm rain within a few minutes. As a result, many parts of Leh town were washed away. Hundreds of people were killed in the disaster and large numbers of houses were damaged, including important government offices. It includes the govt. hospital, BSNL building and AIR building. Many surrounding villages were also devastated due to torrential rain and land slides.

What Leh has faced is described by the govt. as a National disaster. The army and air force are carrying out rescue and relief operations. Being an important tourist centre, thousands of tourists, including foreigners, were caught in Leh when the tragedy struck. It is natural that these tourists tried to escape from the place as early as possible.

It is reported that the situation was exploited by private airlines companies and they have looted these tourists. They have charged as much as Rs. 30,000 to Rs.35,000 per passenger, as fare from Leh to Delhi. It is nothing but daylight robbery. It is reported that even foreign tourists engaged themselves in the rescue works. But the profit greedy private airlines companies decided to make money out of the disaster. All that the Aviation Ministry did was, it issued a statement that the private airlines should not try to make money from a National disaster. In contrast, the govt. owned Air India plunged in to action to evacuate the stranded passengers.

This is not the first time when the private airlines companies made money in times of crisis. When the staff of Jet airways and Air India went on strike, the same story took place. The private airlines companies looted the Passengers by charging exorbitant fares. The Leh experience should teach a lesson to the people of this country, that the existence of a strong Public Sector is very essential to serve the nation in times of crisis. We, the trade unions, should effectively take this message to the people.
