US 20070110603A1

(19) United States

(12) Patent Application Publication

(10) Pub. No.: US 2007/0110603 A1

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(43) Pub. Date: May 17, 2007

(54) HIGH-PRESSURE FUEL PUMP

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(21) Appl. No.: **11/599,468**

(22) Filed: **Nov. 15, 2006**

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Nov. 16, 2005 (JP) 2005-331036

Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
F04B 7/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **417/505**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A high-pressure fuel pump comprises a pressurizing chamber for pressurizing fuel, an outlet valve for discharging the fuel pressurized in the pressurizing chamber to an outlet passage, a relief passage for connecting the outlet passage located downstream of the outlet valve and the pressurizing chamber with each other while bypassing the outlet valve. A relief valve device is provided in the relief passage and adapted to open when an internal pressure of the outlet passage becomes higher than that of the pressurizing chamber, thereby providing communication between the outlet passage and the pressurizing chamber. The relief valve includes a relief spring mechanism for pressing a relief valve to a relief valve seat. At least the relief spring mechanism among members of the relief valve device is provided outside the pressurizing chamber in the pump body.

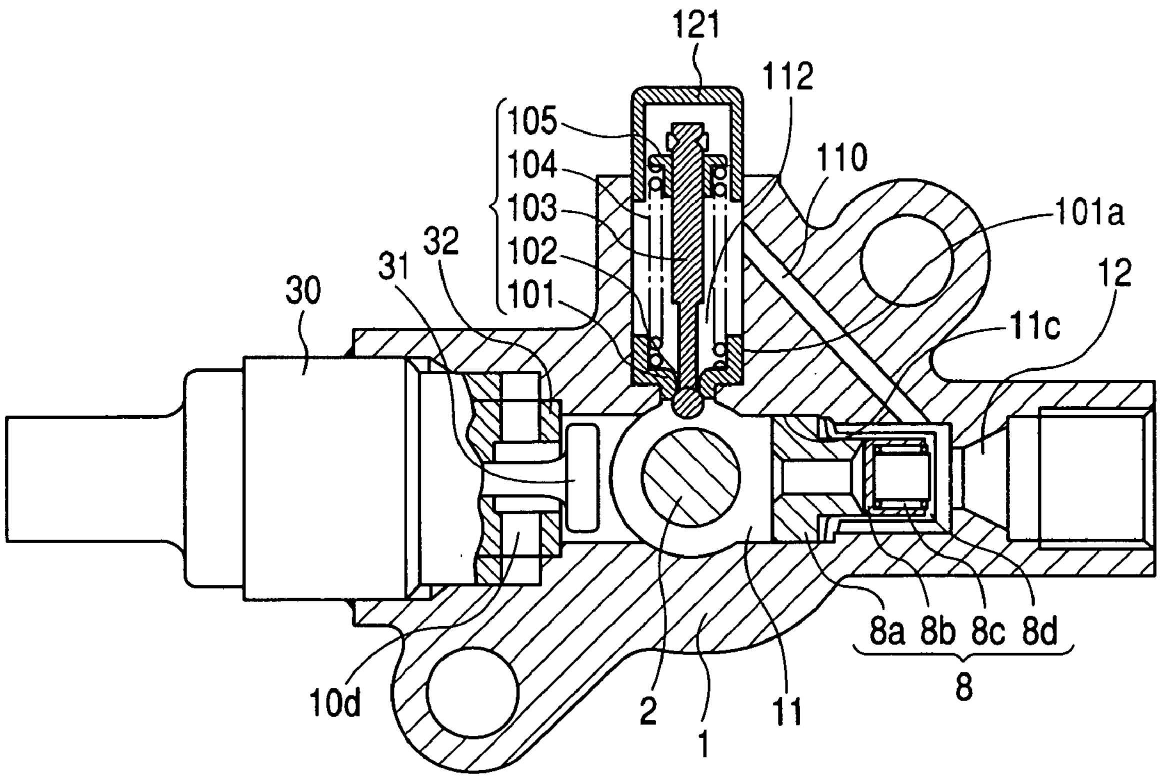


FIG. 1

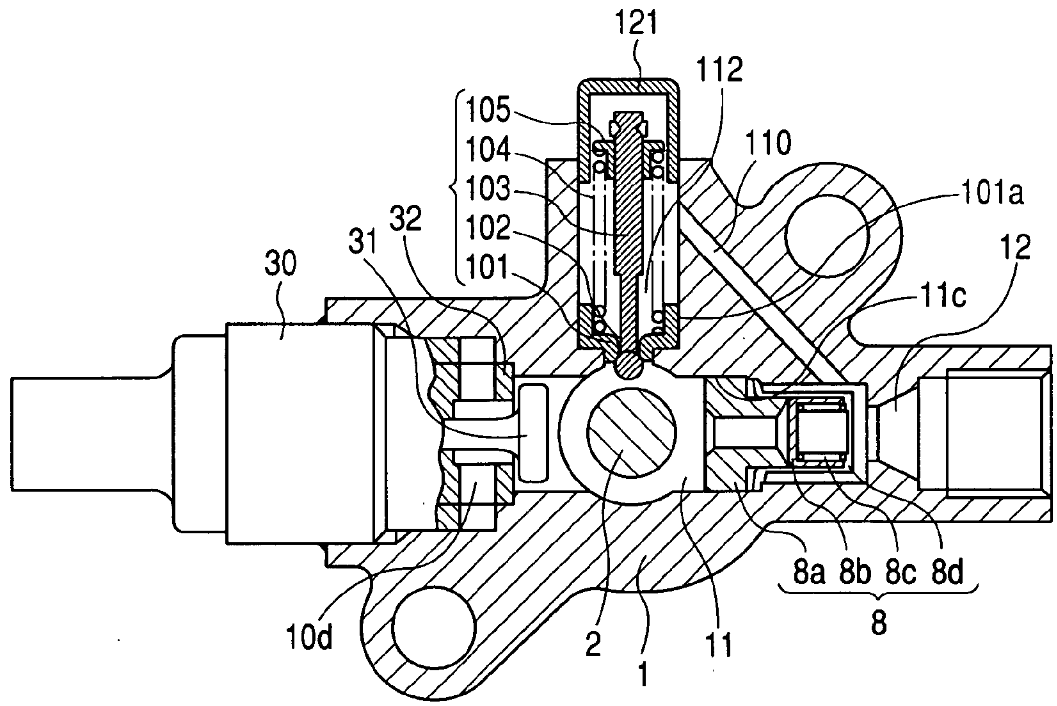

121
112
105
104
103
102
101
110
101a
32
31
30
11c
12
8a 8b 8c 8d
8
10d
2
1
11

FIG. 2

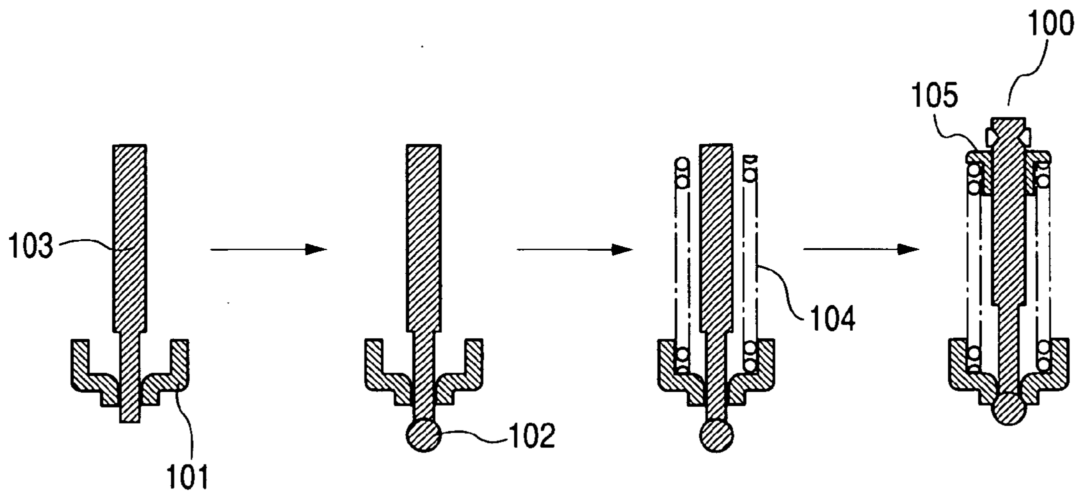

100
105
103
104
102
101

FIG. 3

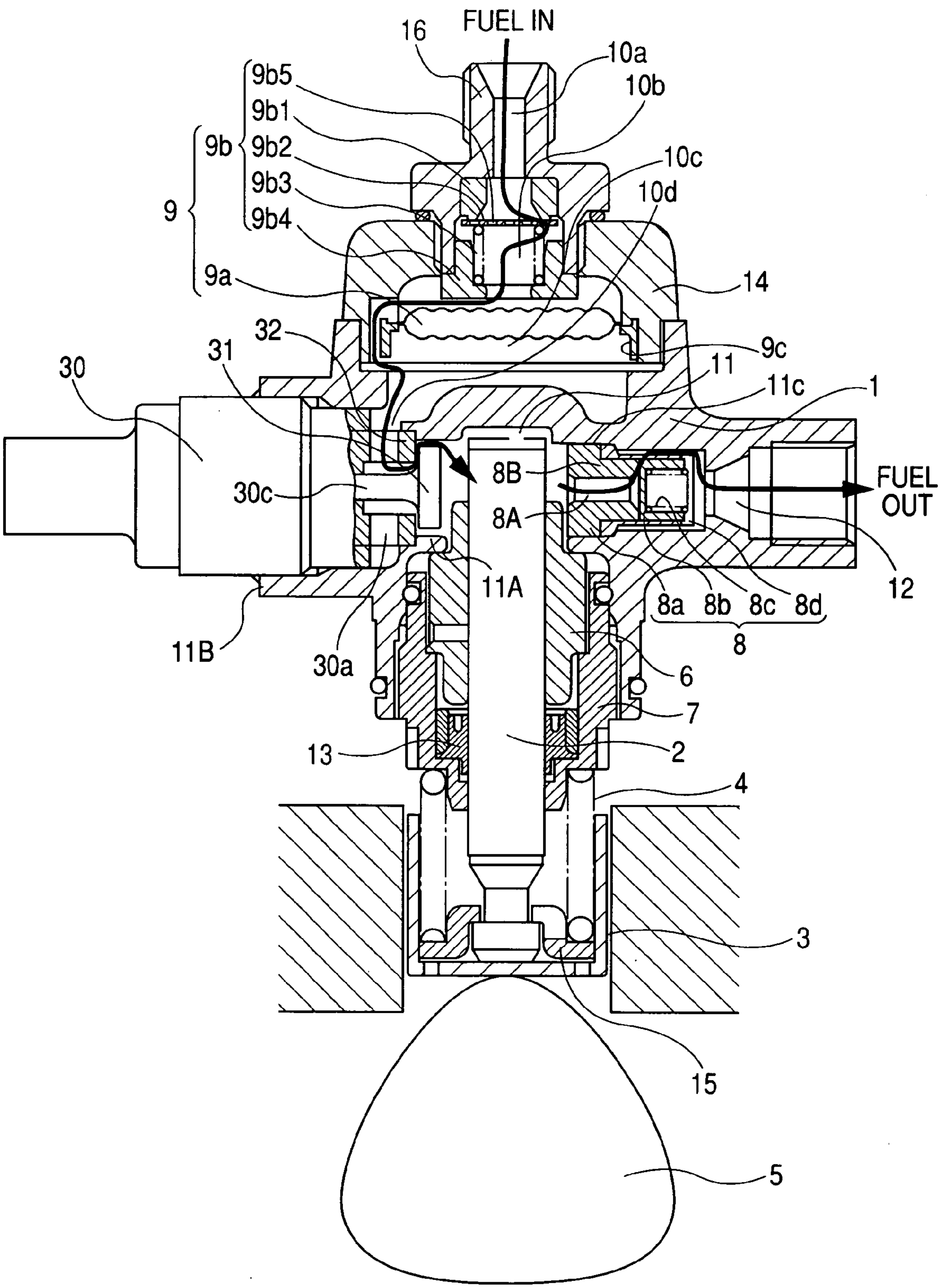

FUEL IN
16
10a
10b
10c
10d
9b5
9b1
9b2
9b3
9b4
9b
9
9a
14
9c
32
31
30
11
11c
1
30c
8B
8A
FUEL OUT
11A
8a 8b 8c 8d
8
12
11B
30a
6
7
13
2
4
3
15
5

FIG. 4

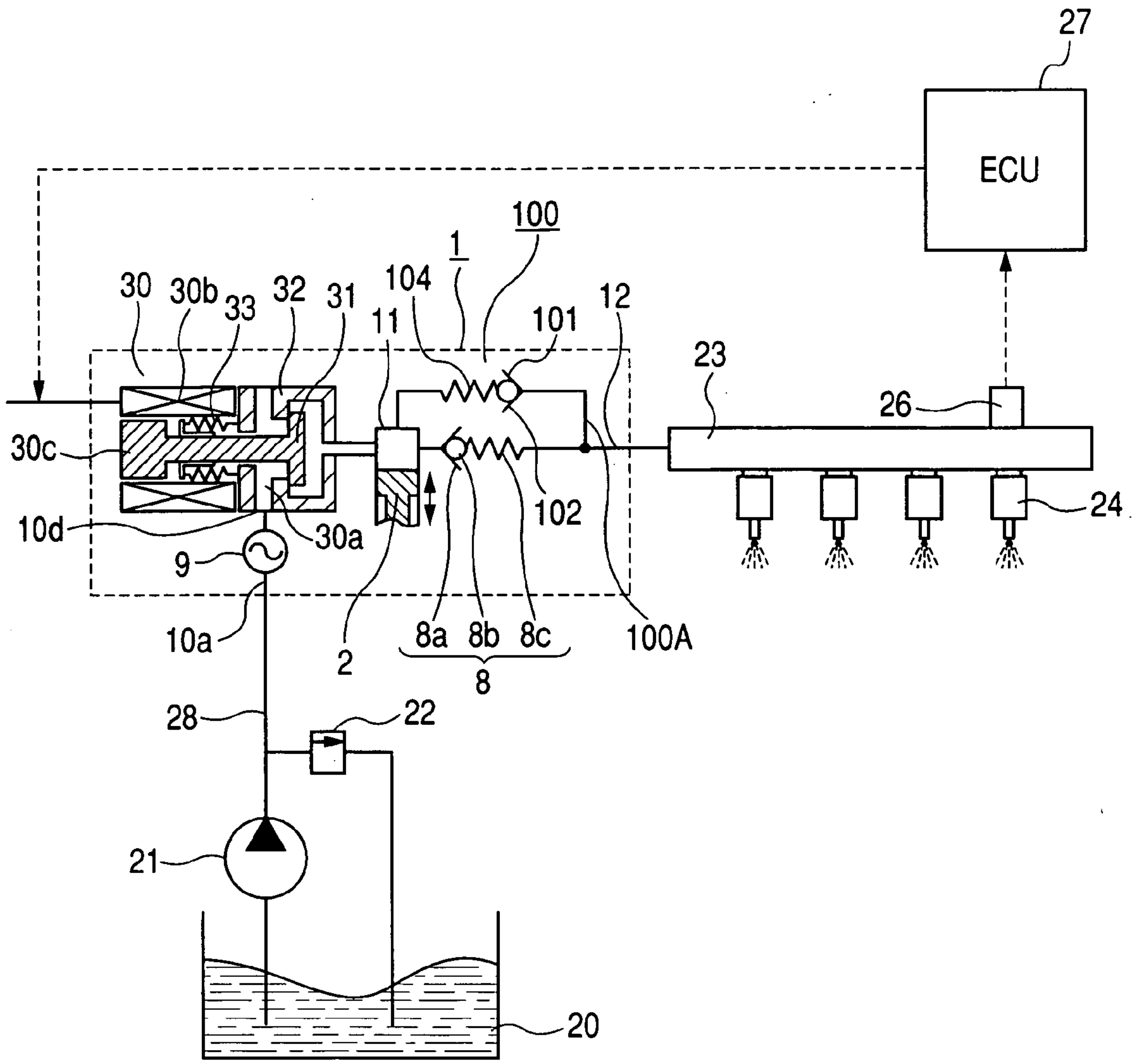

27
ECU
100
1
30
30b
33
32
31
11
104
101
12
23
26
30c
10d
30a
102
24
9
10a
2
8a
8b
8c
8
100A
28
22
21
20

FIG. 5

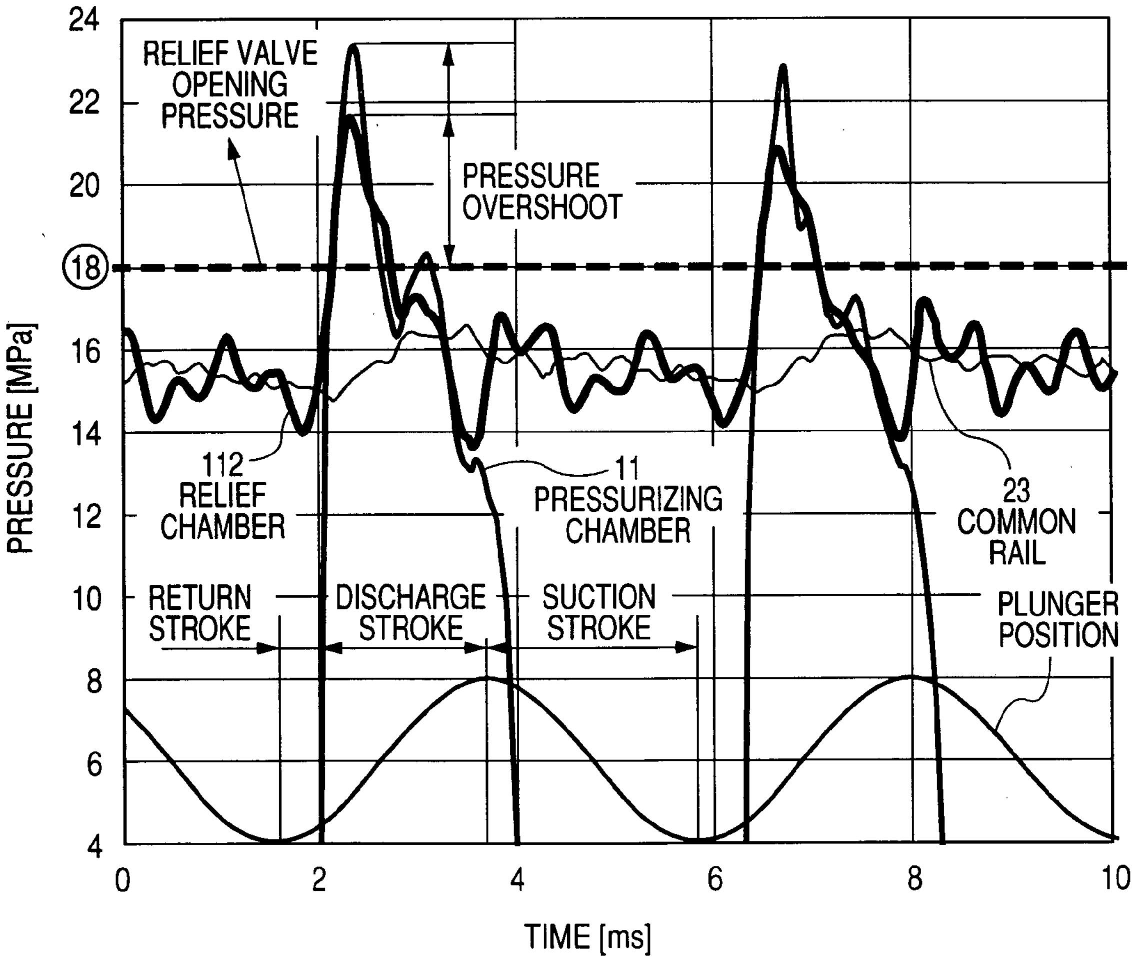

RELIEF VALVE OPENING PRESSURE
PRESSURE OVERSHOOT
18
112 RELIEF CHAMBER
11 PRESSURIZING CHAMBER
23 COMMON RAIL
RETURN STROKE
DISCHARGE STROKE
SUCTION STROKE
PLUNGER POSITION
PRESSURE [MPa]
TIME [ms]
24
22
20
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
0
2
4
6
8
10

FIG. 6

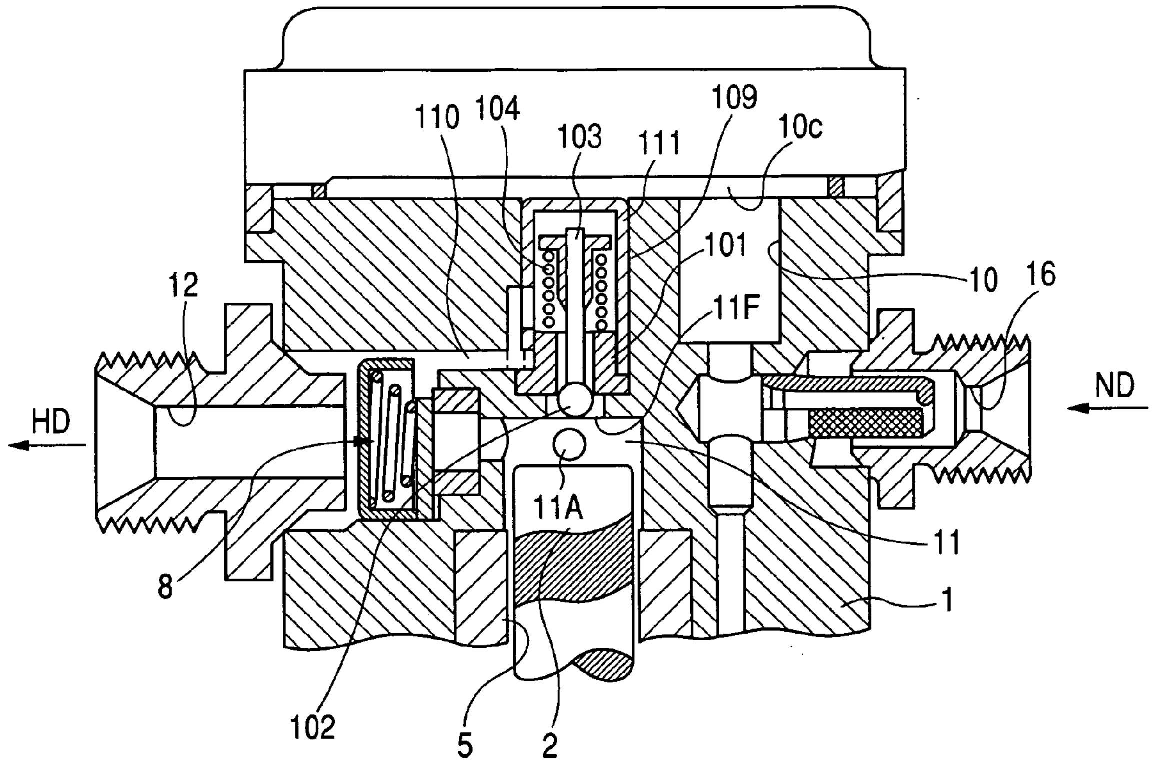

110
104
103
111
109
10c
101
10
16
12
11F
ND
HD
11A
11
8
1
102
5
2

FIG. 7

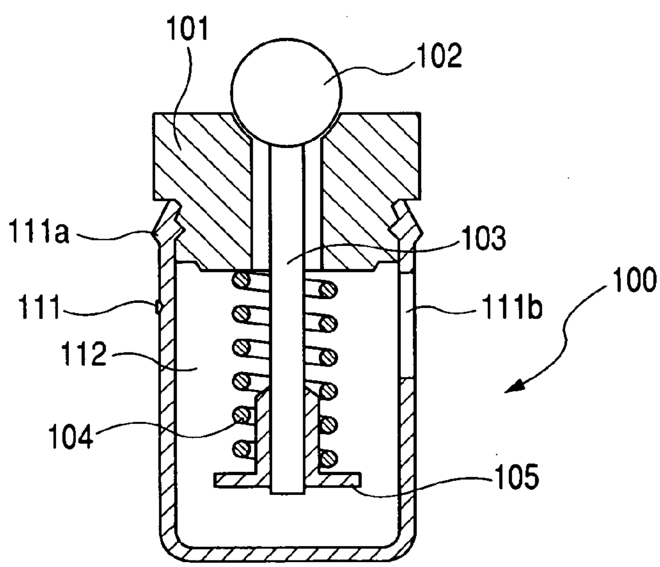

101
102
111a
103
111
111b
100
112
104
105

FIG. 8

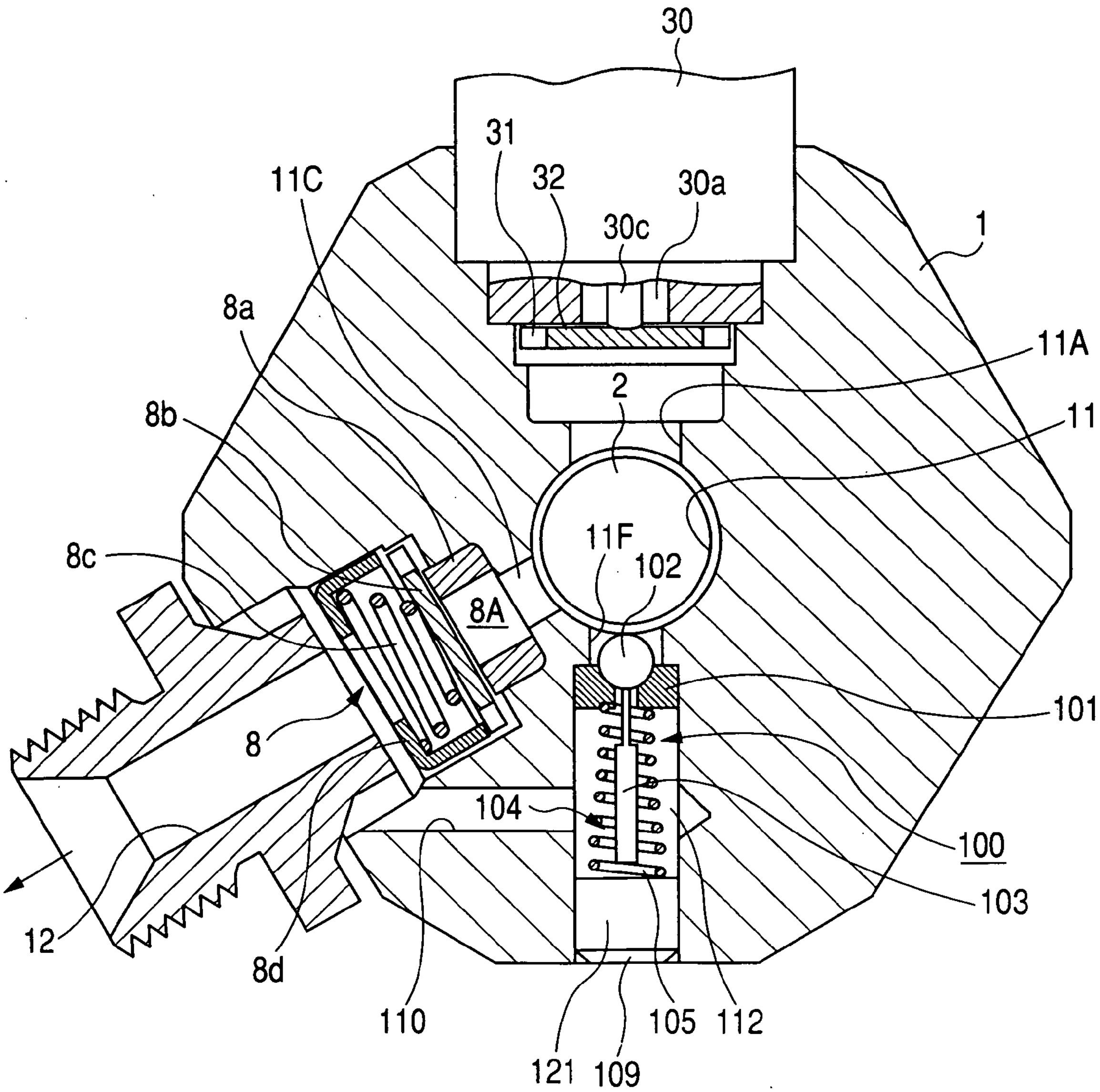
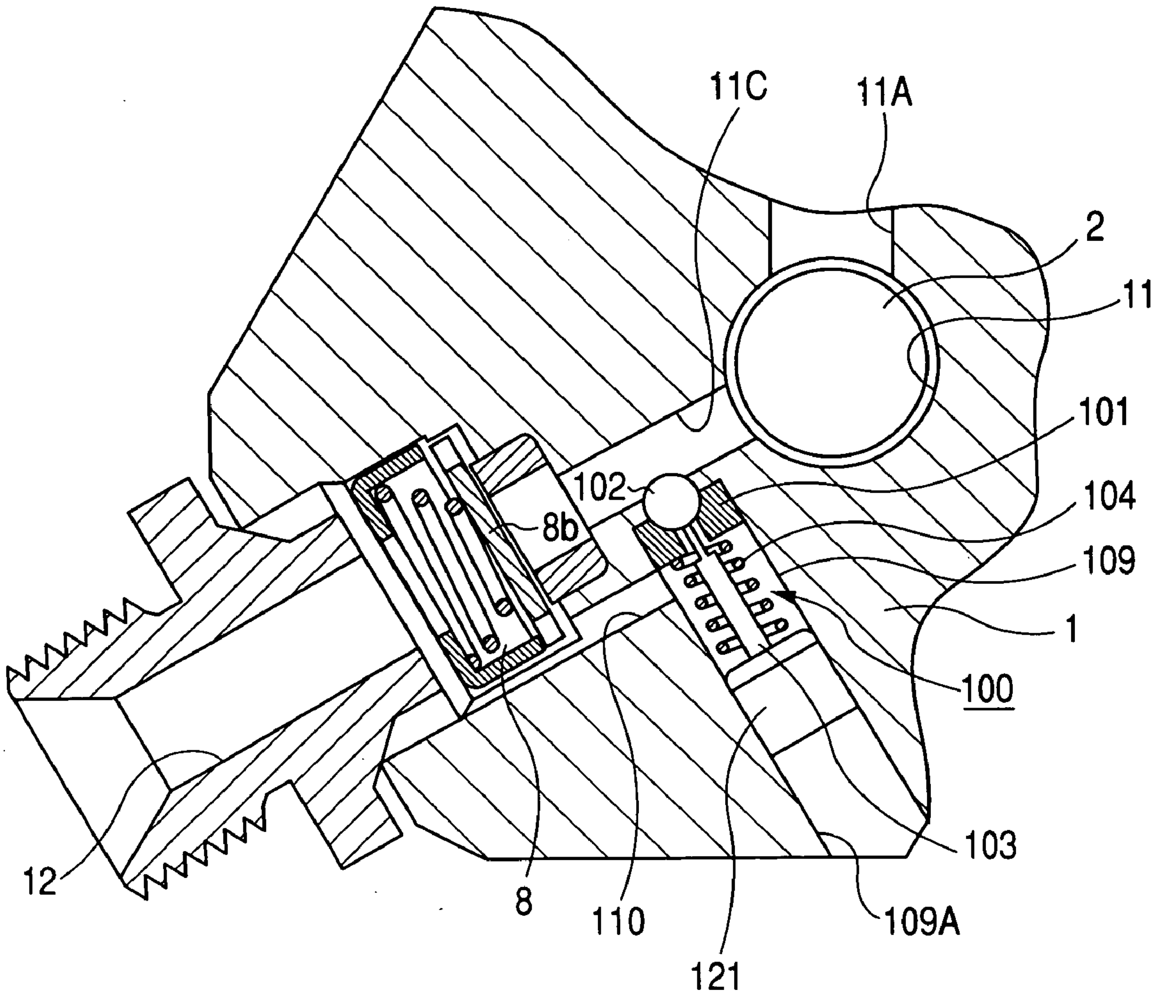

30
31
32
30c
30a
11C
1
8a
11A
2
8b
11
11F
8c
102
8A
101
8
104
100
103
12
8d
110
105
112
121
109

FIG. 9



HIGH-PRESSURE FUEL PUMP

CLAIM OF PRIORITY

[0001] The present application claims priority from Japanese application serial no. 2005-331036, filed on Nov. 16, 2005, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by references into this application.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to a high-pressure fuel pump for feeding high-pressure fuel to a fuel injection valve in an internal combustion engine.

[0003] The present invention is particularly concerned with a high-pressure fuel pump having a relief valve device installed into a pump body, the relief valve device serving as a safety device for returning fuel to a pressurizing chamber when the pressure of discharged fuel becomes abnormally high.

BACKGROUND ART

[0004] In Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication No. 2004-138062 there is described a high-pressure fuel pump having a relief valve device, the relief valve device comprising a valve seat member having a central fuel passage and a seat surface formed around the central fuel passage, a valve element serving as a relief valve for being placed against the seat surface, and a spring member for pushing the valve element against the seat surface, the relief valve device being mounted to a body of the pump in such a manner that the spring member is positioned on the pressurizing chamber side.

[0005] However, in the above prior art, since the relief valve device is installed within the pressurizing chamber or within a passage leading to the pressurizing chamber, the volume of the pressurizing chamber substantially becomes large and the compression efficiency becomes lower.

[0006] More particularly, it suffices for the volume of the pressurizing chamber to be about 1 to 2 CC, but since the relief valve device is installed, the volume of the pressurizing chamber or the sum of the volume of the pressurizing chamber and that of the relief valve installed portion becomes 6 to 7 CC. Consequently, assuming that the stroke of a plunger piston (hereinafter referred to simply as "plunger") within the pressurizing chamber is the same, the compression efficiency becomes lower.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] It is an object of the present invention to provide a high-pressure fuel pump which, even if a body of the pump is provided with a relief valve device for returning fuel abnormally high in pressure from an outlet passage to a pressurizing chamber, is high in compression efficiency, i.e., high in energy efficiency, without increasing the volume of a compression chamber.

[0008] The above object of the present invention can be achieved by constructing the relief valve device so that only the relief valve as a valve element can be installed on the pressurizing chamber side and the spring mechanism can be installed on the outlet passage side of the pump.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. **1** is an entire cross sectional view of a high-pressure fuel pump according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] FIG. **2** is an assembling diagram for explaining a unit of a relief valve device used in the first embodiment;

[0011] FIG. **3** is an entire longitudinal sectional view of the high-pressure fuel pump of the first embodiment;

[0012] FIG. **4** shows an example of a fuel supply system using the high pressure fuel supply system of the first embodiment;

[0013] FIG. **5** shows pressure waveforms in various portions of the high-pressure fuel pump of the first embodiment and in a common rail;

[0014] FIG. **6** is an entire cross sectional view of a high-pressure fuel pump according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

[0015] FIG. **7** is a diagram for explaining a unit of a relief valve device used in the second embodiment;

[0016] FIG. **8** is an entire cross sectional view of a high-pressure fuel pump according to a third embodiment of the present invention; and

[0017] FIG. **9** is an entire cross sectional view of a high-pressure fuel pump according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFFERED EMBODIMENTS

[0018] A first embodiment of the present invention will be described hereinafter with reference to FIGS. **1** to **5**.

First Embodiment

[0019] The construction and operation of a fuel feeding system related to this embodiment will be described below with reference to FIG. **4**. FIG. **4** is a general outline view of the system.

[0020] The portion enclosed with a broken line represents a pump body **1** of a high-pressure fuel pump. An arrangement and parts inside the enclosing broken line are integrally installed in the pump body **1**.

[0021] Fuel in a fuel tank **20** is pumped up by a feed pump **21** and is fed to an inlet joint **10***a* in the pump body **1** through a suction pipe **28**. At this time, the pressure of the fuel to be fed to the pump body **1** is regulated to a constant pressure by a pressure regulator **22**.

[0022] The fuel having passed through the inlet joint **10***a* then passes through a pressure pulsation damping device **9** and an inlet passage **10***d*, and the fuel reaches pre-inlet port **30***a l of a solenoid-controlled inlet valve* **30**. The inlet valve **30** constitutes a capacity variable mechanism for the high-pressure fuel pump. As to the pressure pulsation dumping device **9**, a detailed description will be given later.

[0023] The solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30** includes a solenoid **30***b*. In an energized state of the solenoid **30***b*, a plunger **30***c* attracted rightward in FIG. **1** and in this state a spring **33** is maintained in a compressed state. In this state, an inlet valve head **31** at one end of the plunger **30***c* opens an inlet port **32** communicating to a pressurizing chamber **11** in the high-pressure fuel pump. The pressurizing chamber **11** is formed by a cup-shaped recess formed in the pump body **1**.

[**0024**] When the solenoid **30***b* is not energized and when there is no difference in fluid pressure between the inlet passage **10***d* (pre-inlet port **30***a*) and the pressurizing chamber **11**, the inlet valve head **31** is exerted in its closing direction with the pressing force of a spring **33** to close the inlet port **32**.

[**0025**] More specifically, the following operations are performed.

[**0026**] When a plunger **2** moves downward in FIG. **1** with rotation of a cam to be described later and the pump is in its suction stroke, the volume of the pressurizing chamber **11** increases and the internal fuel pressure of the same chamber decreases. In this suction stroke, when the internal fuel pressure of the pressurizing chamber becomes lower than that of the inlet passage **10***d* (pre-inlet port **30***a*), a valve opening force (a force which induces a rightward movement in FIG. **1** of the inlet valve head **31**) based on a fluid pressure difference of fuel is given to the inlet valve head **31**.

[**0027**] The inlet valve head **31** is set soas to overcome the pressing force of the spring **33** to open the inlet port **32** by this valve opening force based on the fluid pressure difference.

[**0028**] In this state, when a control signal is applied from an engine control unit **27** ("ECU" hereinafter) to the solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30**, an electric current flow through the solenoid **30***b*, so that the electromagnetic plunger **30***c* moves rightward in FIG. **1** with a magnetic force, whereby a compressed state of the spring is maintained. As a result, the inlet valve head **31** maintains the inlet port **32** open state.

[**0029**] When the plunger **2** completes its suction stroke and shifts to its compression stroke (an upwardly moving state in FIG. **1**) while voltage (a control signal) is applied to the solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30**, the solenoid **30***b* maintains in its continuing energized state. Thereby the inlet valve head **31** remains the open state.

[**0030**] The volume of the pressurizing chamber **11** decreases with the compressing motion of the plunger **2**, but in this state the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber does not rise because the fuel having taken in the pressurizing chamber **11** is again returned to the inlet passage **10***d* (pre-inlet port **30***a*) through the inlet valve head **31** which is open. This stroke is called as "a fuel return stroke".

[**0031**] In this fuel return state, when the control signal provided from the ECU **27** is turned-off to de-energize the solenoid coil **30***b*, the magnetic force exerted to the plunger **30***c* becomes extinct after the lapse of a certain time (after a magnetic and mechanical delay time). Since the pressing force of the spring **33** exerts to the inlet valve head **31**, so when the electromagnetic force exerting to the plunger **30***c* becomes extinct, the inlet valve head **31** closes the inlet port **32** under the pressing force of the spring **33**. Upon closing of the inlet port **32**, the fuel pressure in the pressurizing chamber **11** rises with the rising motion of the plunger **2**. Then, when the fuel pressure becomes equal to or higher than the pressure of a fuel outlet port **12**, the fuel remaining inside the pressurizing chamber **11** is discharged at a high pressure through an outlet valve device **8** and is fed to a common rail **23**. This stroke is called as "a delivery stroke". That is, the compression stroke (a rising stroke from the bottom dead center to the top dead center) comprises the return stroke and the delivery stroke.

[**0032**] By controlling the timing of de-energizing the solenoid **30***c* in the solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30**, it is possible to control the delivery amount of the high-pressure fuel. If the timing of de-energizing the solenoid **30***c* is advanced, then in the compression stroke, the ratio of the return stroke is small and that of the delivery stroke is large. That is, the amount of the fuel returned to the inlet passage **10***d* (pre-inlet port **30***a*) is small and that of the fuel discharged at a high pressure is large. In contrast to this, if the timing of de-energizing the solenoid **30***c* is delayed, then in the compression stroke, the ratio of the return stroke is large and that of the delivery stroke is small. That is, the amount of the fuel returned to the inlet passage **10***d* is large and that of the fuel discharged at a high pressure is small. The timing of de-energizing the solenoid **30***c* is controlled in accordance with an instruction provided from the ECU.

[**0033**] In the above arrangement, by controlling timing of de-energizing the solenoid **30***c*, the delivery amount of the high-pressure fuel can be controlled in accordance with the amount required by the internal combustion engine.

[**0034**] An outlet of the pressurizing chamber **11** is provided with the outlet valve device **8**. The outlet valve device **8** includes an outlet valve seat **8***a*, an outlet valve **8***b* and an outlet valve spring **8***c*. When there is no fuel pressure difference between the pressurizing chamber **11** and the fuel outlet port **12**, the outlet valve **8***b* is put in pressurized contact with the outlet valve seat **8***a* with the pressing force of the outlet valve spring **8***c* and is closed. Only when the internal fuel pressure of the pressurizing chamber **11** becomes higher than the pressure of the fuel outlet port **12**, the outlet valve **8***b* opens against the outlet valve spring **8***c*. Thereby the fuel in the pressurizing chamber **11** is discharged at a high pressure to the common rail **23** through the fuel outlet port **12**.

[**0035**] Thus, a required amount of the fuel in the fuel inlet port **10***a* is pressurized to a high pressure by the reciprocating motion of the plunger **2** within the pressurizing chamber **11** in the pump body **1** and the high-pressure fuel is fed to the common rail **23** from the fuel outlet port **12**.

[**0036**] The common rail **23** is provided with the injectors **24** and a pressure sensor **26**. The injectors **24** are prepared corresponding to the number of cylinders in the internal combustion chamber. The injectors **24** open and close in accordance with control signals provided from the ECU **27** to inject fuel into the cylinders.

[**0037**] The pump body **1** is provided with a relief passage **100**A for communicating between the downstream side of the outlet valve **8***b* and the pressurizing chamber **11**, while bypassing the outlet valve **8***b*.

[**0038**] In the relief passage **100**A is provided with a relief valve **102** which allows the flow of fuel in only one direction from the outlet (delivery) passage to the pressurizing chamber **11**. The relief valve **102** is pressurized to a relief valve seat **101** with a relief spring **104**. A relief valve device **100** is configured so that the relief valve **102** leaves from the relief valve seat **101** and opens the relief passage **100**A when the difference in pressure between the pressurizing chamber **11** and the relief passage **100**A becomes equal to or higher than a predetermined pressure.

[**0039**] In the event of occurrence of an abnormally high pressure for example in the common rail **23** due to failure of an injector **24** and when the difference in pressure between the relief passage **100**A and the pressurizing chamber **11** becomes equal to or higher than the valve opening pressure set in the relief valve **102**, the relief valve **102** opens and the fuel which has thus become an abnormally high pressure is returned to the pressurizing chamber **11** through the relief passage **100**A. Thereby pipes installed in high-pressure portions such as the common rail **23** are protected.

[**0040**] The arrangement and operation of the high-pressure fuel pump will be described below in more detail with reference to FIGS. **1** to **5**.

[**0041**] The pressurizing chamber **11** is formed at central position of the pump body **1**. Furthermore, the pump body **1** is provided with the solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30** for feeding the fuel to the pressurizing chamber **11** and the outlet valve device **8** for discharging the fuel from the pressurizing chamber **11** to the outlet (delivery) passage **12**. Further, a cylinder **6** for guiding a reciprocating motion of the plunger **2** is installed so as to face the pressurizing chamber **11**.

[**0042**] The outer periphery of the cylinder **6** is held by a cylinder holder **7**. The cylinder **6** is installed in the pump body **1** by engaging a male thread formed on the outer periphery of the cylinder holder **7** into a female thread formed on the pump body **1**. The plunger **2** is adapted to perform the reciprocating motion within the pressurizing chamber **11**, and the cylinder **6** holds the plunger **2** slidably in the directions of the reciprocating motion.

[**0043**] A tappet **3** is provided at a lower end of the plunger **2**, the tappet **3** converts a rotational motion of a cam **5** mounted on a cam shaft of the engine into a vertical reciprocating motion and transfers the vertical reciprocating motion to the plunger **2**. With a spring **4**, the plunger **2** is put in pressurized contact with the tappet **3** through a retainer **15**, whereby the plunger **2** can be reciprocated vertically with the rotational motion of the cam **5**.

[**0044**] A plunger seal **13** is held at a lower end side portion of the inner periphery of the cylinder holder **7** in a state in which it is in relatively slidable contact with the outer periphery of the plunger **2** at a lower end portion of the cylinder **6**. With the plunger seal **13**, a blow-by gap between the plunger **2** and the cylinder **6** is sealed to prevent the leakage of fuel to the exterior. At the same time, lubricating oil (including engine oil) for lubricating a sliding portion in the engine room is prevented from flowing into the pump body **1** through the blow-by gap.

[**0045**] As shown in FIG. **3**, the pressure pulsation dumping device **9** for dumping the spread of pressure pulsation generated within the pump to the fuel pipe **28** is installed in a damper cover **14**.

[**0046**] The pressure pulsation dumping device **9** comprises a pressure damper **9***a* and a cut-off mechanism **9***b*. The cut-off mechanism **9***b* is fixed to the damper cover **14** by means of an inlet joint **16** provided with an inlet port **10***a*. The damper cover **14** is fixed to the pump body **1** and the inlet passage **10** comprises **10***a*, **10***b*, **10***c* and **10***d*. The pressure pulsation dumping device **9** is provided at halfway of the inlet passage to diminish the spread of pressure pulsation generated within the pump to the fuel pipe **28**.

[**0047**] In the case where the fuel once taken in the pressurizing chamber **11** is returned to the inlet passage **10***d* (pre-inlet port **30***a*) again through the opened inlet valve head **31** because of the capacity being controlled, pressure pulsation occurs in the inlet passage **10** (pre-inlet port **30***a*) by the fuel returned to the inlet passage **10**. However, since the inlet passage **10***c* as a damper chamber (formed between the cup-like damper cover **14** and an annular depression formed in the outer periphery of the pump body **1**) is provided with a metallic damper **9***a*, such a pressure pulsation is absorbed and diminished by expansion and contraction of the metallic damper **9***a*. The metallic damper **9***a* is formed by jointing two corrugated metallic discs at their outer peripheries, with an inert gas such as argon being charged into the interior of the metallic damper **9***a*. The numeral **9***c* denotes a metallic mounting piece for fixing the metallic damper **9***a* to the inner periphery of the damper cover **14**.

[**0048**] The cut-off mechanism **9***b* is provided in the interior of the inlet joint **16**. The outer periphery of a cut-off valve seat **9***b***1** of the cut-off mechanism **9***b* is press-fitted and thereby fixed to the inner periphery on the fuel inlet side of the inlet joint **16**. One surface of a disc-like cut-off valve **9***b***2** of the cut-off mechanism **9***b* comes into contact with the cut-off valve seat **9***b***1** to cut off the fuel passage. One end of a helical valve spring **9***b***3** of the cut-off mechanism **9***b* is in contact with the other surface of the cut-off valve **9***b***2**. The other end of the valve spring **9***b***3** of the cut-off mechanism is supported by a spring stopper **9***b***4**. The spring stopper **9***b***4** is fixed to the inner periphery on the fuel inlet side of the inlet joint **16** by press-fitting.

[**0049**] Thus, the cut-off valve **9***b***2** is pressurized toward the cut-off valve seat **9***b***1** by the valve spring **3** so as to allow the flow of fuel to only the direction of **10***b*, **10***c* and **10***d* from the inlet port **10***a*. The cut-off valve **9***b***2** is provided with small holes **9***b***5**.

[**0050**] In the fuel return stroke, the cut-off valve **9***b* is rendered in a closed state, so that the fuel merely flows in a very small amount from the inlet joint **10***a* to the inlet pipe **28** through the small holes **9***b***5** and is mostly absorbed by a change in volume of the pressure dumping damper **9***a*. The small holes **9***b***5** prevent an increase of fuel pressure in the inlet passages **10***b*, **10***c* and **10***d* (pre-inlet port **30***a*) during the fuel return stroke.

[**0051**] The solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30** is fitted on a cylindrical boss portion **11**B of the pump body **1** in an airtight manner so that the inlet valve head **31** closes an inlet-side opening **11**A of the pressurizing chamber **11**, and is thereby fixed to the pump body.

[**0052**] When the solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30** is thus mounted to the pump body, the pre-inlet port **30***a* and the inlet passage **10***d* are connected with each other.

[**0053**] The outlet valve device **8** has an outlet valve body **8** which is centrally provided with an outlet (delivery) passage **8**A. The outer periphery of the outlet valve body **8** is press-fitted in a cylindrical hole **11**C formed on an outlet side of the pressurizing chamber **11**. The outlet valve body

8B is provided with an outlet valve seat **8***a* and a cylindrical outlet valve **8***b* with a bottom. An outer flat surface of the bottom of the cylindrical outlet valve **8***b* is in contact with the outlet valve seat **8***a* by pressing force of the valve spring **8***c*. The valve spring **8***c* is constituted by a helical spring. The outlet valve **8***b* and the valve spring **8***c* are inserted in the cylindrical portion of the outlet valve body **8**B and held on the outlet side of the outlet valve body **8**B by an outlet valve stopper **8***d*. The cylindrical outlet valve stopper **8***d* is press-fitted in the outlet-side outer periphery of the outlet valve body **8**B, thus eventually constituting the outlet valve device **8**.

[0054] When mounting the outlet valve device **8**, the outlet valve device **8** is press-fitted from the pressurizing chamber **11** side into the outlet hole **11**C formed in the pressurizing chamber and is held by the cylindrical hole **11**C.

[0055] The outlet valve stopper **8***d* has an annular portion as a spring holder for the valve spring **8***c* and plural leg portions extending toward the outlet valve body **8**B from the annular portion. The tips of the leg portions are connected together through a ring-like portion.

[0056] When the outlet valve **8***b* in the outlet valve unit **8** opens by overcoming the pressing force of the valve spring **8***c*, it comes into contact with the outlet valve stopper **8***d* and the operation thereof is restricted thereby.

[0057] Thus, the stroke of the outlet valve **8***b* is determined appropriately by the outlet valve stopper **8***d*. If the stroke is too large, the fuel discharged at a high pressure to the fuel outlet port **12** again flows backward into the pressurizing chamber **11**, so that the efficiency as a high-pressure pump becomes lower. The outer periphery portion of the outlet valve **8***b* is guided by the outlet valve stopper **8***d* so that the outlet valve **8***b* moves in only the stroke direction when the outlet valve **8***b* repeats opening and closing motions.

[0058] According to the above construction, the outlet valve device **8** serves as a check valve which restricts the fuel flowing direction.

[0059] Further, the operation of the relief valve device will be described below in detail.

[0060] As assembly processes of the relief valve shown in FIG. **2**, the relief valve device **100** comprises a relief valve seat-spring holder **101**, a relief valve **102**, a relief valve rod **103**, a relief spring **104** and a relief spring stopper **105**.

[0061] When doing assembly of the relief valve device, the valve rod **103** is inserted into the relief valve seat-spring holder **101** and thereafter one end of the valve rod **103** is provided with the relief valve **102** by welding for example. Then, the relief spring **104** is inserted around the valve rod **103** and one end of the relief spring **104** is inserted into the relief valve seat-spring holder **101**. Then relief spring stopper **105** is fitted on the valve rod **103** and fixed thereon by welding for example. A spring force of the relief valve spring **104** for pressing the relief valve **102** against the valve seat **101** is determined by the fixed position of the relief spring stopper **105**. An opening pressure of the relief valve **102** is determined to a prescribed value based on the pressing force of the relief spring **104**.

[0062] As shown in FIG. **1**, the relief valve device **100** thus unitized is press-fitted at a press-fit portion **101***a* along the inner periphery wall of a through hole **109** formed in the pump body and is fixed thereby. Then, a cap **121** is fixed so as to close an inlet of the through hole **109** to prevent the leakage of fuel from the high-pressure fuel pump to the exterior. A relief chamber **112** is formed by the relief valve seat-spring holder **101**, through hole **109** and cap **121**.

[0063] The relief chamber **112** communicates to the fuel outlet port **12** of the high-pressure fuel pump. Thus the relief spring **104** is installed on the outside (the relief chamber **112**) of the pressurizing chamber **11** with reference to the relief valve seat **101**. In other words, since the relief chamber **112** is provided on the outlet side of the high-pressure pump with reference to the relief valve seat **101**, the relief spring **104** is installed on the outlet side of the high-pressure pump with reference to the relief valve seat **101**. Accordingly the volume of the pressurizing chamber **11** does not increase even if the relief valve seat **101** (the outlet) of the relief valve device **100** faces the pressurizing chamber **11** of the high-pressure fuel pump.

[0064] FIG. **5** shows an example of pressure waveforms in various portions in a state in which, with the high-pressure fuel pump, the fuel is normally pressurized to a high pressure and the high-pressure fuel is fed to the common rail **23**. A target fuel pressure in the common rail is adjusted to 15 MPa. The pressure for opening the relief valve **102** is adjusted to 18 MPa.

[0065] During an upward-moving motion of the plunger **2** and just after the pump operation changes from the fuel return stroke to the pressurizing stroke, a pressure overshoot occurs within the pressurizing chamber **11**. The pressure overshoot in the pressurizing chamber **11** is propagated from the fuel outlet port **12** and the relief chamber **112** through a relief passage **110**. As a result, the propagated pressure equal to or higher than the pressure for opening the relief valve **102** occurs on the inlet side of the relief valve **102**. However, the pressure overshoot in the pressurizing chamber **11** also exerts the relief valve **102** from the pressurizing chamber **14** side toward the valve seat **101** because the relief valve **102** is positioned in the pressurizing chamber **11** outside the outlet of the relief chamber **112**. The pressure overshoot in the pressurizing chamber **11** is larger than that in the relief chamber **112**. Consequently, a difference force of both pressure overshoots exerts in a direction of closing the relief valve **102** and hence it is possible to prevent the relief valve **102** from erroneously opening even if the pressure overshoot occurs at the change from the fuel return stroke to the pressurizing stroke.

[0066] Thus, even if the high-pressure fuel pump is provided the relief valve device **100** to prevent the occurrence of a damage caused by an abnormal high-pressure in a high-pressure portion such as the common rail **23**, it is possible to attain a high-pressure fuel pump which exhibits neither a lowering of flow rate caused by malfunction nor a lowering of volumetric efficiency.

[0067] Next, a detailed description will be given below about the case where an abnormal high-pressure occurs for example in the common rail **23** due to failure or the like of an injector **24**.

[0068] As the volume of the pressurizing chamber **11** decreases with the plunger **2** upward-motion, the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber increases. When the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber **11** becomes higher than that of the outlet passage **12**, the outlet valve **8*b*** opens and the fuel is discharged from the pressurizing chamber **11** to the outlet passage **12**. From the instant just after the outlet valve **8*b*** opens, the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber overshoots and becomes very high. This high pressure is also propagated into the outlet passage **12** and the internal pressure of the outlet passage also overshoots at the same timing as the pressurizing chamber.

[**0069**] In this case, if the outlet of the relief valve device **100** communicates to the inlet passage, the difference in pressure between the inlet and the outlet of the relief valve becomes higher than the pressure for opening the relief valve, resulting in malfunction of the relief valve.

[**0070**] On the other hand, in this embodiment, the outlet of the relief valve device **100** communicates to the pressurizing chamber **11** (the relief valve seat **101** faces to the pressurizing chamber **11**) and the relief valve **102** is positioned in the pressurizing chamber **11**. The internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber **11** consequently exerts the relief valve **102** on the outlet side of the relief valve device and the internal pressure of the outlet passage **12** also exerts the relief valve **102** on the inlet side of the relief valve. Since pressure overshoot is occurring at the same timing within both the interior of the pressurizing chamber **11** and that of the outlet passage **12**, the difference in pressure between the inlet and outlet of the relief valve device **100** does not become higher than the pressure for opening the relief valve. That is, the relief valve does not malfunction.

[**0071**] As the volume of the pressurizing chamber increases with the plunger **2** downward-motion, the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber decreases. When the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber **11** becomes lower than that of the inlet passage **10*d***, the fuel flows into the pressurizing chamber **11** through the inlet passage **10*d***. Then, as the volume of the pressurizing chamber **11** again decreases with the plunger **2** upward-motion, the fuel is pressurized to a high pressure and is discharged in this state by the mechanism described above.

[**0072**] If a fuel injection valve fails, that is, the injection function stops, and the fuel fed to the common rail cannot be supplied to the associated cylinder, the fuel accumulates between the outlet valve **8*b*** and the common rail **23**, and the fuel pressure becomes abnormally high.

[**0073**] In this case, if the pressure increase is a gentle increase, the abnormal condition is detected by a pressure sensor in the common rail, and a safety function of a capacity control mechanism (the solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30**) in the inlet passage is carried out so as to decrease the amount of fuel discharged. However, an instantaneous abnormal increase of pressure cannot be coped with by this feedback control using the pressure sensor.

[**0074**] In the event the capacity control mechanism in the inlet passage or an overflow passage should fail and fail to function in the maximum capacity mode, the outlet pressure of high-pressure pump becomes abnormally high in a state of operation for which a large amount of fuel is not required.

[**0075**] In this case, even if the pressure sensor in the common rail detects the abnormally high pressure, it is impossible to remedy this abnormally high pressure condition because the capacity control mechanism itself is at fault.

[**0076**] When such an abnormally high pressure occurs, the relief valve device **100** used in this embodiment functions as a safety valve.

[**0077**] In this case, as the volume of the pressurizing chamber **11** increases with the plunger **2** downward-motion, the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber decreases. When the pressure in the inlet of the relief valve, i.e., the pressure in the outlet passage **12** of the pump, becomes higher than the pressure in the outlet of the relief valve, i.e., the internal pressure of the pressurizing chamber **11**, the relief valve **102** opens and allows the abnormally high pressure fuel in the outlet passage **12** to return into the pressurizing chamber **11**. Therefore, the fuel pressure does not rise beyond a prescribed high level even when an abnormally high pressure occurs, that is, the high pressure pipes are protected.

[**0078**] During the normal delivery stroke in this first embodiment, because of the mechanism described above, even when the pressure overshoot occurs, an inlet-outlet pressure difference equal to or higher than the pressure for opening the relief valve **102** is not developed and hence the relief valve does not open.

[**0079**] In both of suction stroke and fuel return stroke, the fuel pressure in the pressurizing chamber **11** lowers to a low level equal to that in the suction pipe **28**. On the other hand, the pressure in the relief chamber **112** rises to the same level as in the common rail **23**. When the difference in pressure between the relief chamber **112** and the pressurizing chamber becomes equal to or higher than the pressure for opening the relief valve **102**, the relief valve **102** opens. Thereby the fuel whose pressure has become abnormally high is returned from the relief chamber **112** to the pressurizing chamber **11**, whereby the high pressure pipes, including the common rail **23**, are protected.

[**0080**] The high-pressure fuel pump is required to pressurize the fuel to a very high pressure of several MPa to several ten MPa, and the pressure (valve opening pressure) for opening the relief valve must be higher. If the valve opening pressure is set lower than such a high pressure, the relief valve will open even when the fuel is pressurized normally by the high-pressure fuel pump. Such a malfunction of the relief valve causes a decrease of the delivery (discharge) volume as the high-pressure fuel pump and a lowering of the energy efficiency.

[**0081**] Therefore, for setting the opening pressure of the relief valve at such a very high pressure it is necessary to increase the pressing force of the relief spring, thus inevitably calling for an increase in size of the relief spring.

[**0082**] However, in the case where the relief spring is disposed in the pressurizing chamber or in the relief passage located on the pressurizing chamber side, such an increase in size of the relief valve leads to a so much increase in the internal volume of the pressurizing chamber or in a chamber leading to the pressurizing chamber.

[**0083**] The high-pressure fuel pump decreases the internal volume of the pressurizing chamber with the plunger upward-motion, thereby compressing and pressurizing the fuel and discharging the fuel at a high pressure. Therefore, the more increase in volume of the pressurizing chamber, the larger amount of fuel is pressurized to a high pressure, thus resulting in a lowering of compressibility in the high-pressure fuel pump and hence a lowering of energy efficiency.

[0084] Further, with the lowering of energy efficiency, the fuel in an amount required by the internal combustion engine can no longer be pressurized to a high pressure. On the other hand, in this embodiment, the relief passage **100**A provides communication between the downstream side of the outlet passage **12** relative to the outlet valve **8***b* and the pressurizing chamber **11**. Furthermore, the fuel pump is provided with the relief passage **100**A separately from the outlet passage **12** and the relief valve **102** for allowing the fuel to flow in only one direction from the outlet passage **12** to the pressurizing chamber **11**. In addition, the relief valve **102** is provided in the relief passage so as to open when the difference in pressure between the valve inlet and outlet becomes equal to or higher than a predetermined valve opening pressure. The relief valve device **100** comprises the relief valve **102**, the relief valve seat member **101** for the relief valve, the relief spring **104** for producing the pressing force, and the spring force transfer member (for example the valve rod **103**) for transferring the spring force to the relief valve **102** so that the relief valve **102** is pressed toward the valve seat **101**. The relief spring is installed on the outlet side (relief chamber **112**) of the high-pressure pump with reference to the relief valve seat member **101**.

[0085] According to the above arrangement, the relief spring can be positioned outside the pressurizing chamber and the outlet (relief valve seat portion) of the relief valve device can be positioned at the pressurizing chamber without increasing the volume of the pressurizing chamber.

[0086] Thus, it is possible to attain a high-pressure fuel pump without malfunction of the relief valve and without a lowering of compressibility (a lowering of energy efficiency) as the high-pressure fuel pump.

[0087] A detailed description will be given below about the lowering of compressibility (lowering of energy efficiency) on the basis of a change in volumetric efficiency taking the bulk modulus of fuel into account. Various values are set as in the following table.

Bulk modulus	K	1	GPa(=10^9 N/mm^2(newton per square millimeter
Internal volume of the pressurizing chamber	V	1700	mm^3 (cubic millimeter)
Plunger dia. φ	D	10	mm (millimeter)
Cam lift	L	5	Mm (millimeter)
Pressure of pressurized fuel	P	10	MPa (10^6 N/mm^2(newton per square millimeter
Theoretical discharge capacity	Q = π*D^2/4*L	392.7	mm^3/stroke (cubic millimeter per stroke)
Volume strain	dV/V = P/K	0.0100	dimensionless
Discharge volume taking bulk modulus into account	Q' = Q − dV	375.7	mm^3/stroke (cubic millimeter per stroke)
Volumetric efficiency taking bulk modulus into account	E = Q'/Q	0.957	dimensionless

[0088] In this case, the volumetric efficiency is 0.957.

[0089] Assuming that the volume of the pressurizing chamber increases to, for example, 6700 m^3 (cubic millimeter) as a result of installation of the relief valve device, the volumetric efficiency decreases to 0.828 (a lowering of 0.148) according to the above calculation.

[0090] The smaller the cam lift, the larger the volumetric efficiency is decreased.

[0091] The cam lift in the above table is 5 mm (millimeter), but if it is changed to 3 mm (millimeter) and calculation is made, a change of volumetric efficiency in case of a change in the internal volume of the pressurizing chamber being made from 1700 mm^3 (cubic millimeter) to 6700 mm^3 (cubic millimeter) is as follows:

[0092] In case of 3 mm (millimeter) lift: 0.928→0.758 (a lowering of 0.170)

[0093] In case of 5 mm (millimeter) lift: 0.957→0.828 (a lowering of 0.148)

Thus, the lowering of volumetric efficiency is remarkable in the case of a pump of a small cam lift.

[0094] If a high fuel delivery (discharge) pressure is required, the volumetric efficiency so much decreases, with a consequent lowering of compressibility (a lowering of energy efficiency).

[0095] There may be adopted a construction wherein there are provided two relief passages for communication between the downstream side of the outlet passage relative to the outlet valve and the upstream side of the inlet passage relative to the inlet valve. In this case, relief valves which allow the flow of fuel in only one direction from the outlet passage to the pressurizing chamber are disposed in the relief passages respectively so as to open when the inlet-outlet pressure difference becomes equal to or higher than a predetermined valve opening pressure. In this case, the operating pressures, i.e., opening pressures, of the two relief valves may be set to different values.

[0096] According to such a construction, in the event of failure of one mechanism, the other mechanism operates as a backup mechanism.

[0097] Incidentally the plural relief passages may comprise a first relief passage whose outlet is open at the pump-inlet passage to be a low fuel pressure passage and a second relief passage whose outlet is open at the pressurizing chamber of the pump to be a high fuel pressure side. Furthermore, an operating pressure (that is a difference pressure between the outlet passage pressure and the inlet passage pressure) for operating the relief valve device of the first relief passage may be set so as to be higher than an operating pressure (that is a difference pressure between the outlet pressure and the pressurizing chamber) of the second relief passage.

Second Embodiment

[0098] A second embodiment of the present invention will be described below with reference to FIGS. **6** and **7**.

[0099] In the example shown in FIG. **6**, a unitized relief valve device **100** is mounted on top of the pressurizing chamber **11**. In this example, a holder **111** for the relief valve device is fixed integrally to a relief valve seat **101** by welding **111***a*. The holder **111** is provided with an aperture **111***b* for communicating to a relief passage **110**. Other members identified by the same reference numerals as in the first embodiment represent the same functional members as in the first embodiment.

[0100] In this embodiment, an aperture **11**F is formed in the top of the pressurizing chamber **11**. The aperture **11**F is closed with the relief valve seat **101** and the relief valve **102**. Only the relief valve **102** among all members of the relief valve device is disposed on the pressurizing chamber **11**-side. When the relief valve **102** opens, the relief chamber **112** and the aperture **11**F communicate to each other through an orifice formed centrally of the relief valve seat **101**. The resulting relief passage communicates to the pressurizing chamber **11**.

[0101] In this embodiment, moreover, since the relief valve device **100** is inserted and fixed into a mounting hole **109** which opens to an inlet passage **10**C, even if there should occur fuel leakage from between the holder **111** and the inner periphery surface of the mounting hole, the fuel does not leak to the exterior and thus safety is ensured.

Third Embodiment

[0102] A third embodiment of the present invention will be described below with reference to FIG. **8**.

[0103] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **8** the fuel outlet port **12** and the relief passage **110** are disposed in a triangular form and this point is the same as in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**.

[0104] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, because of the type wherein the outlet valve device **8** is mounted from the pressurizing chamber side, the inlet-side hole **11**A and the outlet-side hole **11**C in the pressurizing chamber are disposed on the same axis.

[0105] In such a type as the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **8** wherein the outlet valve device **8** is mounted into the outlet-side hole **11**C from the outside of the pump body **1**, it is possible to construct the pump so that the solenoid-controlled inlet valve **30** and the relief valve device **100** are disposed on the same axis.

Fourth Embodiment

[0106] A fourth embodiment of the present invention will be described below with reference to FIG. **9**.

[0107] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **9**, a through hole **109** for mounting of the relief valve device **100** is formed so as to communicate with the outlet passage **11**C located between the pressurizing chamber **11** and the outlet valve device **8**.

[0108] This embodiment is advantageous in that the outlet valve **8***b* in the outlet valve device **8** and the relief valve **102** in the relief valve device **100** can be disposed in proximity to each other and hence the relief passage **110** can be made shorter than in the other embodiments.

[0109] According to the fuel pump of those embodiments thus constructed, they are possible to provide high-pressure fuel pumps having the following advantages. That is, in the event of occurrence of an abnormally high pressure due to for example failure of a fuel injection valve, fuel pressurized to the abnormally high pressure can be released from the relief valve to the pressurizing chamber. Thus, pipes and other devices of the high-pressure pumps are not damaged by the abnormally high pressure. Furthermore, high-pressure pumps which are superior in compressibility, i.e., high in energy efficiency, can be provided while ensuring the above-mentioned advantages

[0110] Although the present invention has been described above while making reference as an example to a high-pressure fuel pump in a gasoline engine, the present invention is also applicable to a high-pressure fuel pump in a diesel engine.

[0111] Further, the present invention is applicable to a high-pressure fuel pump provided with any type of a capacity control mechanism independently of the type and mounting position of the capacity control mechanism.

1. A high-pressure fuel pump comprising:

a pressurizing chamber for pressurizing fuel,

an outlet valve for discharging the fuel pressurized in the pressurizing chamber to an outlet passage,

a relief passage for connecting the outlet passage located downstream of the outlet valve and the pressurizing chamber with each other while bypassing the outlet valve, and

a relief valve device provided in the relief passage and adapted to open when an internal pressure of the outlet passage becomes higher than that of the pressurizing chamber, thereby providing communication between the outlet passage and the pressurizing chamber,

wherein the relief valve includes a relief spring mechanism for pressing a relief valve to a relief valve seat, and

wherein at least the relief spring mechanism among members of the relief valve device is provided outside the pressurizing chamber in the pump body.

2. A high-pressure fuel pump comprising:

a pressurizing chamber for pressurizing fuel,

an outlet valve for discharging the fuel pressurized in the pressurizing chamber to an outlet passage,

a relief passage for returning the fuel in the outlet passage located downstream of the outlet valve to the pressurizing chamber when the fuel in the outlet passage abnormally becomes high, and

a relief valve device for opening and closing the relief passage,

wherein the relief valve device comprises a relief valve seat member for receiving the relief valve positioned on the pressurizing chamber-side, a relief spring for producing the pressing force, and a spring force transfer member for transferring the pressing force to the relief valve so that the relief valve is pressed toward the relief valve seat member, and

wherein the relief spring is installed on the outlet side of the high-pressure pump with reference to the relief valve seat member.

3. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 2, wherein the pressurizing chamber is formed by a cup-shaped recess formed in a body of the pump and the fuel is pressurized by a plunger and is discharged from the outlet valve, and

wherein the plunger is supported by a supporting member fixed to the body of the pump so as to be capable of reciprocating within the pressurizing chamber.

4. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 2, wherein the outlet valve has been installed from the pressurizing chamber side.

5. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 2, wherein the relief passage is open on a peripheral side face of the pressurizing chamber.

6. A high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 2, wherein the return passage is open to a top surface of the pressurizing chamber.

7. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 2, wherein the relief valve device forms an independent unit as an assembly.

8. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 2, wherein the relief passage provided with the relief valve device is disposed in a plural number and an outlet of at least one of the plural relief passages is open at an inlet passage to be a low pressure passage in the pump.

9. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 8,

wherein the plural relief passages comprise a first relief passage whose outlet is open at the pump-inlet passage to be a low fuel pressure passage and a second relief passage whose outlet is open at the pressurizing chamber of the pump to be a high fuel pressure side, and

wherein an operating pressure for operating the relief valve device of the first relief passage is set so as to be higher than that of the second relief passage.

10. A high-pressure fuel pump comprising:

a pressurizing chamber for pressurizing fuel,

a outlet valve for discharging the fuel pressurized in the pressurizing chamber to an outlet passage,

a relief passage connecting the outlet passage of the pump and the pressurizing chamber to each other so that the outlet passage side is an upstream side and the pressurizing chamber side is a downstream side,

a relief valve seat member positioned at outlet side of the relief passage in the vicinity of the of the pressurizing chamber and having a valve seat surface on the downstream side of the relief passage,

a relief valve positioned on the downstream side of the valve seat member to open and close a fuel passage in cooperation with the relief seat surface, the fuel passage being formed in the valve seat member,

a valve rod connected to the valve body and extending to the upstream side of the valve seat member through the fuel passage of the valve seat member, and

a spring member positioned on the upstream side of the valve seat member to pull the valve body to the seat surface through the valve rod.

11. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 10, wherein the pressurizing chamber is formed by a cup-shaped recess formed in a body of the pump and the fuel is pressurized by a plunger and is discharged from the outlet valve, and

wherein the plunger is supported by a supporting member fixed to the body of the pump so as to be capable of reciprocating within the pressurizing chamber.

12. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 10, wherein the outlet valve has been is installed from the pressurizing chamber side.

13. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 10, wherein the relief passage is open on a peripheral side face of the pressurizing chamber.

14. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 10, wherein the relief passage is open to a top surface of the pressurizing chamber.

15. The high-pressure fuel pump according to claim 1, wherein the valve drive mechanism includes an electromagnetic drive mechanism.

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