

## **Demand for a judicial probe into the collapse of Ash Pond of OPGC, Bankarpali in Odisha**

**SHRI SURESH PUJARI (BARGARH):** The tragic incident of the collapse of Ash Pond ? C? of OPGC, Banharpali in my constituency on Saturday morning has renewed the shock and life threat in the people. The bridge of the Ash Pond collapsed under heavy pressure on Saturday causing the flow of ashes and contaminated water into nearly 120 acres of cultivable land with standing crops, the water sources, and finally into the Hirakud reservoir from where water is lifted to provide drinking water to Jharsuguda and Sambalpur and other districts, and endangered lives of people of village Shardhapali and Katatikra of Lakhanpur Block of Jharsuguda in particular and the people of the region in general. Upon my visit to the site, and affected villages and after holding talks with officials of the company, administration, and masses, my irresistible conclusions are: 1. The construction work of Ash Pond was of inferior quality and was awarded for lower than estimated cost given by Madras IIT; 2. The physical capacity of Ash Pond had exhausted but was still operational; 3. The scientific method of distribution of intake pressure on all sides of the ridges through rotational discharge of watery ashes into the pond was not followed, resulting in constant pressure on the front side ridge culminating in the flow of the most ash and water outside by breaking the ridge. The Ash Pond was constructed and operated in a negligent manner endangering the life and property inviting serious penal action against the erring officials and contraction. Adequate compensation to the affected farmers for standing crops and loss of fertility of their land is to be fairly assessed and paid. Such incidents of the collapse of Ash Pond are happening again and again in Jharsuguda by M/S Vedanta, OPGC, and other power plants in the area. For this a judicial probe is necessary to take within its sweep the causes of the present and past collapse of Ash Pond and suggest measures to prevent its recurrence.

Therefore, I request both the hon. Minister of Power as well as the Forest and Environment and Jal Shakti to cause an inquiry by high-level technical experts to find out the causes, fix the responsibility, take stern action against the erring officials and construction company, and impress upon the State Government to take up the remedial measures to ensure that that such incidents do not happen in Jharsuguda district of Odisha.

Thank You.