

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
COAL  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3484

ANSWERED ON:22.12.2004

FIRE IN JHARIA

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**Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:**

- (a) the suggestions made by a committee constituted by the Government in 1998 regarding fire incidents in Jharia and Raniganj;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the extent to which the fire has been controlled till date; and
- (d) the reasons for not controlling the fire completely?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE FOR COAL (DR.DASARI NARAYANA RAO)

(a) & (b) A High Level Committee to look into the problems of subsidence and fire in Raniganj and Jharia Coalfields was constituted by the Ministry of Coal with Secretary (Coal) as its Chairman in Dec., 1996. The Committee submitted its report in January, 1998. Recommendations of the Committee are as follows:

1. Wherever possible residents of all unstable areas should be shifted to non-coal bearing zones. For this purpose, satellite townships are the best long term solution against subsidence hazards in the coalfields.
2. There should be a total ban on any new construction over declared unsafe areas in the coalfields. Government of Bihar should also enact a suitable legislation in line with the one already existing in West Bengal preventing construction over unsafe areas.
3. For tackling the problem of fire and subsidence both in Jharkhand Coalfield (JCF) & Raniganj Coalfield (RCF), the participation and assistance from State Govt. and local administration is essential. Any enforcing agency entrusted with the responsibilities of carrying out mitigating measures against fire and subsidence in RCF and JCF should be adequately represented by the above authorities.
4. The mitigation measures against subsidence and fire hazards are very costly options and fruitful implementation of these measures can only be possible through separate executing agency with separate funding. Formation and representatives of such agencies responsible for formulating schemes, their implementation and management of funds should be finalized at the earliest. A broad outline of executing agencies has been evolved in consultation with the concerned State Govts. and the Govt. companies.
5. The innovative hydro-pneumatic stowing technology currently being used at some locations in RCF has been found to be a very slow process. High pressure slurry pumping technology for underground void filling should be tried at some locations in BCCL for stabilizing inaccessible unstable underground workings.
6. Intensive stabilization work of unstable areas under locations, like Raniganj town from where population can not be shifted, should be carried out and persons affected in the high risk but low density areas may be relocated in a phased manner.
7. The mitigation measures against subsidence and fire hazards are very costly option. For arranging fund for the purpose of stabilisation of subsidence prone areas and resettlement of affected people, the money could be made available either through planned expenditure as may be approved by Planning Commission or unplanned expenditure from Coal Conservation and Development Act fund after making suitable enhancement.
8. Considering the urgency one scheme each by ECL and BCCL for shifting of the population from the unsafe areas may be taken up without waiting for the positioning of the institutional arrangement from planned funds available with Ministry of Coal.
9. The Interim Report submitted by BCCL and ECL jointly with State authorities on the fire and subsidence prone areas indicating likely affected population and financial implications should be kept in view while drawing up priority wise schemes for immediate and effective way to deal with the problems.

(c) Details with respect to control of fire in Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields are as under:-

(i) In Jharia coalfield

In the year 1971, 17.32 Sq. Km. area was under fire which now stands at 8.90 Sq. Km. Only, BCCL had 70 fires, out of which 10 fires have been extinguished. In the intervening period 6 fires came up too. 22 fire schemes had been taken up which could reduce the extent of fire or kept fire under control. 2 fire schemes, one at South Lodna and other Alkusa have been completed. 6 fire schemes are on- going and are in different stages of completion. Impact of the same can be ascertained only after the completion of the schemes.

(ii) In Raniganj Coalfield

In ECL, the fire is in a very limited area and it is under control. Time to time blanketing in fire area is needed.

(d) Various methods for control of mine fire are construction of isolation, stopping, sand flushing, nitrogen injection, flooding of seams, sealing of pits/inclines, blanketing/surface sealing, digging out fire, trenching, water pooling etc. Except for digging out fire, all other methods can control the mine fires but complete extinguishment of fire is not possible. The digging of fire can be done only at limited depths and that too there should be no constraint of habitation, railway line, jore etc. Therefore application of this method is not possible in all the cases, unless the habitation are shifted, railway line, jore etc. are dismantled or diverted.