

MR. SPEAKER : No, it is the statement that will be made here. The Minister will make an elaborate statement.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : That will depend on the time that you decide to have the debate.

MR. SPEAKER : It is at four o'clock but the copies of the Declaration should be made available to the Members at 11 o'clock.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTEREE : It should not just be the copies of the Declaration. Certain resolutions have been adopted which we oppose

All our statements on this Resolution should also be laid before the House.

MR. SPEAKER : Yes.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Otherwise, it is meaningless if something is adopted. We have to either accede to it or not. Our statement concerning that should be laid on the Table of the House.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : The entire documents should be laid on the Table of the House.

14.46 hrs.

(Mr. Deputy-Speaker in the Chair)

### CALLING ATTENTION TO URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

#### Problems of fire and subsidence in and around Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : I call the attention of the Minister of State of the Ministry of Coal to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that she may make a statement thereon:

"The reported situation arising out of fire and subsidence taking place very fast in and around the areas of Jharia, Raniganj and Asansol coalfields and the steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank the hon'ble Members Shri Badu Deb Acharia as he has drawn the attention of this House towards this issue. Jharia, Raniganj and some other towns near Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields are located on pillar based mines where mining had taken place almost five to six decades ago. The stability of these pillar mines is doubtful as the mining had been done in an unsystematic manner. The Gugnani Committee has been constituted by the Department of

Coal for conducting a deep study about the security in the Coal mines including the issue of threat posed by the old under ground mines before the towns and residential areas.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : There should be order in the House, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : No side talks please. Please take your seats.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH : In August 1979, the committee had mentioned that there is a big and multifaceted problem of subsidence in Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields. In Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields there are many towns, villages, rivers/pond belt areas, roads and railway lines etc. which are situated on the small Coal pillars. Besides this, fire is also active in these areas which is creating danger to the structures situated on the surface. Not only the stability of the mines under these areas is difficult and dangerous but its effectiveness is also doubtful.

The fire had already broken out in the Jharia coalfields long time ago and it had been reported in the year 1916. During these years the fire spread terribly to such an extent that it has become very difficult to prevent it.

As per the survey conducted after the nationalisation of these mines, 70 incidents of fire had been reported in the radius of 17 square kilometers in Bharat Coking Coal Ltd. 22 projects involving Rs. 114.59 crore were launched to deal with these 70 fire incidents. With the joint efforts and the estimated expenditure of Rs. 73 crore fire could be extinguished only in 10 incidents out of them and in rest of the cases fire could be brought more or less under control.

To find the long term solution to the problem of fire incidents taking place in Jharia Coalfields a comprehensive study has been started under the "Jharia Mine fire control Technical Assistance project" with World Bank's financial assistance of 12 million American dollars. It has been revealed from the study that to deal with the fire incidents taking place in Jharia mines, as per the revised estimate about 22,300 families are to be shifted and rehabilitated and equipments worth 225 million American dollars will have to be installed. Discussion is going on with the expert Committee of the World Bank to implement this project.

Jharia city is situated over the area based on instable pillars and the problem of subsidence also cannot be denied. Due to uncontrolled increase in the accommodation in these areas, it has become very difficult to take effective measures to deal with the fire incidents. In the most sensitive areas, people have been warned time and again of the threat of subsidence and they have been requested to be shifted in the safer places.

On 27.10.1996 cracks have taken place in 219 houses situated in Chowthai Kulie. The construction of all the houses on the land of Bharat Coking Coal Ltd. was unauthorised.

Attention of several committees has been drawn to the problem of subsidence since 1922. In the year 1990 a Apex Reviewing committee constituted by the Coal India Ltd. Had conducted a survey of 49 temporary sites of Raniganj Coalfields (Out of 11.8 square kilometer, 4.8 square kilometer is a residential area) Out of these 49 sites, 38 sites are not safe for residential purpose.

An expenditure of about rupees 4000 crore (at the 1992 level) has been anticipated for shifting and rehabilitating these people.

According to the section 7 of the Coal Mine (Nationalisation) Act 1973, for any Legal liability violation before the Nationalisation period, neither the Union Government nor the Coal India Ltd. (or its subsidiaries) are responsible for it.

In spite of these statutory provision, the problems like fire in the mines and sinking of land should not be neglected on human ground. To deal with such problems in a proper manner, the State Governments of Bihar and West Bengal were urged to take action actively because in these actions besides fire and sinking of land, the cases of rehabilitation of people are also involved. To meet this situation, sufficient fund and physical resources are needed.

To meet these objectives the Government have decided to set up a high level committee comprising of the representatives of the Union and the State Governments. The committee will start functioning, after receiving the nomination from the concerned Ministries and the State Government of Bihar and West Bengal.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, the subsidence in Raniganj and Jharia Coalfields has been discussed on the floor of the House a number of times and various suggestions were also given by Members of this House, by the people's representatives of that area and more particularly, by the Government of West Bengal. The Chief Minister of West Bengal had written a number of letters to the Prime Minister drawing the attention of the Government of India towards the serious situation prevailing in Raniganj Coalfield which is the oldest coalfield of our country. Why is this subsidence taking place? Why is there fire underground? This is not a recent event. The Calling Attention Notice was given by me because of recent event that has taken place in Jharia township only on the 27th October, 1996 when cracks in more than 500 dwelling units had developed suddenly in the evening. A large area was subsided. What the hon. Minister has stated just now is not correct. A person having only one house in that area, in that house also, the crack has developed.

So, it is not correct to say that the entire area belongs to Bharat Coking Coal Company.

Sir, I personally visited that site. I went to every House and met the affected people. I have seen that people are living there for quite a long time and their forefathers had been there for the last hundred years. If the land belongs to BCCL, how can there be a petrol pump? This petrol pump has to be closed down because of subsidence. How a petrol pump was sanctioned on that land if that land belongs to the BCCL?

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Mr. Acharia, the Private Member's business is to be started at 3.00 P.M. and the hon'ble Minister has to give his reply also therefore you may ask direct question.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Please give me some time. The Calling Attention Motion has been taken only at 2.45 PM.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You may ask question directly.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : You may extend the Private members' business upto 3.15. One more Member has to speak after me. You will have to give time to him also. A colliary is in his area.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : We shall also request him, if the House does not agree, then it will not be possible.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please ask direct question.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, I cannot finish within two-three minutes. There is another hon. Member, Shri Haradhan Roy who will also be raising some questions.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : He will also be given time.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, this is not correct. The subsidences which are taking place in the area are because of coal mines from where coal was extracted prior to nationalisation. The Standing Committee on Energy very clearly and categorically, in its report, stated

"If subsidence takes place in the coal mine area because of pre-nationalisation extraction of coal in the pre-nationalisation period, the responsibility lies with the coal company."

The Standing Committee on Energy in its 21st report of Tenth Lok Sabha on Action Taken on Recommendations on Demands and Grants of Coal, Ministry of Coal noted :

"That it should be the sole responsibility of coal companies to take appropriate remedial

and preventive measures in areas which fall within the leasehold of coal companies, even though occurrence of subsidence is due to pre-nationalisation mining activities and illegal mining operation."

It had also recommended:

"That the funds available under Coal Mines Safety and Conservation Act should be fully utilised by the coal companies for this purpose."

The Committee note:

"That despite earlier recommendations of the Committee and the gravity of the problem of subsidence, no urgent action has been taken to finalise the institutional arrangement with the concerned State Governments."

The Committee emphasised the need of setting up of an institutional arrangement with the State Government at the earliest.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Therefore, you ask the question, please.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Therefore, Sir, long back, in 1989, a reference has been made in the Statement by the Minister about Bhuvnani Committee which had also recommended, that remedial measures to be undertaken by the Ministry of Coal. That was not taken and because of that the subsidences are taking place.

The hon. Minister of Coal has stated that recently the Government has set up a high level Committee. I would like to know from the hon. Minister when was this Committee set up and I would also like to know what are the terms and reference of this Committee.

15.00 hrs.

Sir, she has sanctioned only a sum of Rs. 15 lakh from the coal company, PCCL, for relief and rehabilitation of the people affected because of subsidence in Jharia township. This amount is insufficient for rehabilitation.

Sir, the formation of committee is not sufficient...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (Kottayam) : Now it is 3 p.m. We have to take up Private Members' Business...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. CHACKO (Mukundapuram) : Sir, we can continue this subject after 6 o'clock...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I would like to know from the Minister of State of the Ministry of Coal whether the Government proposes to rehabilitate the entire people who were affected because of subsidence in Jharia township and also in Raniganj Coalfield. If the Government proposes to rehabilitate the people affected because of subsidence, what is the amount that is sanctioned for the rehabilitation of the people affected

because of subsidence? What are the future steps of the Government to tackle this subsidence in Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields.

*[Translation]*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : It is three O'clock. If the House permits then the time can be extended for 10 minutes because the Hon'ble Minister is yet to reply.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will give such permission only when this item will be completed in five minutes because it is going to be 3 O'clock now and it has not completed yet. It will continue. Therefore it will be O.K. if their questions and answers are completed by 3.05 P.M. Otherwise the Members will take the time of other Members also.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : It cannot be completed within five minutes.

*[English]*

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA : Sir, Private Member's Business should not be encroached by other subjects. Other subjects are important. At the same time, Private Members' Business is the exclusive right of every Member. Every time, this is going to be encroached and this is going to be an usual practice in this House. This should be stopped...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Yes.

Shri Haradhan Roy, please put your questions. Please hurry up.

*[Translation]*

SHRI HARADHAN ROY (Asansol) : Sir, what the hon ble Minister has stated is not correct. After nationalisation it becomes the responsibility of the Government. When we take their property then we must take their responsibility also. Secondly, perhaps the Hon'ble Minister does not know that there is a public undertaking committee. The Ministry is having a Parliamentary Consultative Committee and the Parliament is having Standing Committees and we are the Members of these committees. The Secretary, Ministry of Coal has said that the Ministry will bear all the expenses. Perhaps the Hon'ble Minister does not know that it had already been decided. Sinking of land is still going in the old mines.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Mr. Roy, please ask the question.

SHRI HARADHAN ROY : Sir, there are about 600 fire and 5694 sinking cases in Raniganj West Bengal and 1732 incidents of fire and 3497 sinking cases in Jharia. The Minister had said that a committee had been constituted. I would like to say that the statement of the Chief Minister of West Bengal is stated here in a wrong way. The Chief Minister of West Bengal had repeatedly asked the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the

Minister of Coal to enact a Law in the Parliament and implement it because it is an important matter. This does not belong to a particular state or a particular area. It is the property of the entire national. Therefore this is a statutory obligation. For this, a law should be enacted by the Union Government in the Parliament as this is the matter of rehabilitation and reclamation of land and also a matter of afforestation. The Government should own this responsibility. We have repeatedly asked the Government the hon'ble Minister knows it. What are the steps taken by the Government to bring the statutory Law. It has been told that rupees four thousand crores are needed in this regard. It is about rupees seven and half thousand crores in record for the provisions of rehabilitation in the Raniganj coal belt. What provision you have made in this regard?

SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon'ble Shri Basu Deb Acharia and Shri Haradhan Roy as they have provided me this information. But I have no knowledge about the question asked by them that how the petrol pump was constructed on the B.B.C.L. land. If petrol pump has been constructed there, I will conduct an inquiry into that. The responsibility of subsidiaries rests with the Coal India Ltd., and Standing Committee on Energy has also said that it takes the responsibility of subsidiaries. You have just stated that an accident had taken place on 23rd October. We have sanctioned Rs. 15 lakh for those persons who have been affected in this accident. Though, the Government wants to resolve this problem but decision regarding constituting a committee at high level has not been taken now. The representatives of West Bengal and Bihar will also be included in this Committee. On receipt of the report the Government will take necessary action. The Secretary, Coal India Ltd. will be the Chairman of the proposed committee and the Chairman, Coal India Ltd., Dte. General of Mines Safety, Chairman-cum Managing Director, CMPDIL, Chairman-cum Managing Director, E.C. Ltd., and Chairman-cum Managing Director BBCL will be the members including the representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Planning Commission and the Government of West Bengal and Bihar. The terms of reference of the Committee inter alia are review of subsidence in the Raniganj and Jharia coalfields and five accident prone areas, to conduct a study to prevent construction of new houses in these areas and suggest measures and to make Government arrangements, suggest measures to deal with the problem of existing houses and conduct study, suggest measures to prevent subsidence in the subsidence and fire prone areas and to make funds available for the purpose, to identify those areas from where shifting of people and their rehabilitation is necessary and where subsidence cannot be prevented, and suggest measures to shift the affected people from those areas and rehabilitate them etc.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : By when this report will be presented?

SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH : The report will be submitted as early as possible. As and when the

members of West Bengal give the report or as soon as the committee is constituted, we will submit the report immediately.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : You should fix a time limit.

SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH : We have asked those State Government to submit the report, we will present it as and when they provide it. We have directed the CMPDIL to visit the area and conduct a survey.

15.09 hrs.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (RAILWAYS) 1996-97

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : Sir, I beg to present the statement (Hindi and English versions) showing the supplementary demands with regard to the Budget (Railway) for the year 1996-97.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT-1026/96]

15.09½ hrs.

#### MOTION RE: SECOND AND THIRD REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH (Vidisha) : Sir, I beg to move:

"That this House do agree with the Second and Third Reports of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 4th and 11th December, 1996, respectively."

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The question is:

"That this House do agree with the Second and Third Reports of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 4th and 11th December, 1996, respectively."

*The motion was adopted.*

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA (Puri) : Sir, what about the Minister's reply on the rise in prices of essential commodities?

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon'ble Minister has to reply.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : From which Ministry the reply has to come?