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12.04 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

(i) Situation arising out of subsidence at Sanctoria and other parts of coal bearing areas of Eastern Coalfields Limited and steps taken by the Govt. in regard thereto

Title: Shri Basu Deb Acharia called the attention of the Minister of Coal to the situation arising out of subsidence at Sanctoria and other parts of coal bearing areas of Eastern Coalfields Limited and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Coal to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The situation arising out of subsidence at Sanctoria and other parts of coal bearing areas of Eastern Coalfields Limited and steps taken by the government in regard thereto."

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO): Sir, a subsidence has occurred in Sanctoria village on 27.11.2004 at about 2.20 p.m. above the period 1912 to 1923.

MR. SPEAKER: You are omitting a whole line. It is "2.20 p.m. above the old workings".

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: No, Sir. It is "at about 2.20 p.m. above the period 1912 to 1923".

MR. SPEAKER: Then, you have given a wrong statement to the Speaker. You have given a different statement to the Speaker. What is all this?

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Probably, I have been given incorrect copy.

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: Sir, I will correct it.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you. I will correct it myself.

...(Interruptions)

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: No mining activities have been undertaken at this place since the formation of Eastern Coalfields Limited.

Cracks have been noticed in 56 houses, out of which 24 houses were considered for immediate vacation and the residents were allotted temporary accommodation nearby. Rest of the Houses are under observation.

Stabilisation work with sand filling through boreholes is already under progress as per approved scheme of Sanctoria village and till November, 2004, 21,000 cu.m. of sand has been filled to drill suitable boreholes in the village and due to difficulty in carrying of material, the desired progress could not be obtained.

Central Mining Research Institute (CMRI), a scientific Institution, has been entrusted the job to study, and suggest measures.

The Sanctoria village is also earmarked for rehabilitation as per action plan to control fire, and subsidence in Raniganj coalfield. The work of rehabilitation is to be taken up by the State Government. The West Bengal State Government has entrusted the job to Asansol-Durgapur Development Authority (ADDA). ADDA has been requested to take-up the job of rehabilitation on priority for Sanctoria village.

For other parts of the area of ECL, as per action plan, 43 stabilisation schemes are to be implemented with an estimated cost of Rs. 411.84 crore. Three stabilisation schemes have been completed, and six are under progress.

Similarly, 92 rehabilitation schemes with an estimated cost of Rs. 1,317.18 crore are to be implemented in 20 years. Sanctoria village also forms a part of the above rehabilitation schemes.

For expediting the above action plan, four (demonstration) rehabilitation schemes, namely, Samdih village, Kenda village, Refugee Basti (Bangal para), and Harishpur village have been approved and taken up for implementation. But the villagers are reluctant to shift to the proposed rehabilitation sites. The West Bengal State Government has entrusted the job to Asansol-Durgapur Development Authority (ADDA). ADDA has taken up the job of demographic survey and about rehabilitation of the four sites, which are under progress. ADDA has already been given Rs. 50 lakh by ECL. Further fund for rehabilitation will be provided to ADDA by ECL from the rehabilitation scheme fund, as and when required.

The successful implementation of the four schemes will make a headway in implementing the entire master plan of Raniganj Rehabilitation Schemes.

In this regard, the Government have taken adequate steps for implementation of the action plan, and in providing necessary funds for the same.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, Raniganj coalfield is the oldest coalfield of our country. Before the nationalisation of coalmines, when the mines were in the private sector, unscientific mining and slaughter mining had taken place there as there was no scientific mining. Sir, after nationalisation of coalmines, the Government of India had not taken any concrete steps to prevent the subsidence, and control and contain the fire.

I had visited Sanctoria village four years back, when there was subsidence. Sir, there had been subsidence in 1969, then again in 1991, then again in 1999, and then again in 2004. When the first subsidence had taken place, nothing was done in order to protect the village, prevent the subsidence by sand-stowing. There is one technology, which is called 'hydro-pneumatic sand-stowing', but it has been proved that this technology is not effective to prevent the subsidence of the area.

Sir, the hon. Minister in his statement has stated that : "Similarly, 92 rehabilitation schemes with an estimated cost of Rs. 1,317.18 crore are to be implemented in 20 years."

There are two aspects. One aspect is to prevent the subsidence -- contain and control the fire. Another aspect is the rehabilitation of the villagers, the people who are being affected because of subsidence. For rehabilitation, the estimate was done more than ten years back, in 1994, and proper survey was also not made. Now, there is a need for an expert committee to go into the entire problem and report to the Government as to what is the nature of the problem and how much fund is required to prevent the subsidence. That is urgently required because no expert committee, in the past, had gone into this aspect properly because there is no proper mapping of underground mining.

There are a large number of underground mines that had been abandoned by the erstwhile owners, and these abandoned mines are creating problems. The Minister has stated that subsidence had taken place "where workings were made during the period 1912 to 1923. No mining activities have been undertaken at this place since the formation of Eastern Coalfields Limited" -- as if, after nationalisation, ECL, where there is no working in the mines, has no responsibility. After nationalisation, ECL has the responsibility and, therefore, the Central Government has the responsibility to tackle this problem. It is a national problem. The Supreme Court of India has given a direction to the Government of India to tackle this problem on a war-footing, but whatever is being done is being done at a snail's pace.

MR. SPEAKER: Please put your question.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Within the last four years, what is the progress that has been made in completing this work? The progress is nothing.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : बहुत हो गया, अब प्रश्न पूछिये।

श्री बसुदेव आचार्य : सुन लीजिए मल्होत्रा जी, यह ह्यूमन प्रॉब्लम है।

श्री रामदास आठवले (पंढरपुर) : अध्यक्ष जी, बीजेपी के 6 साल और इनके 6 महीने काफी है।

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not get diverted. He wants to derail you. Do not get subsided.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : During the six years of their rule, they have done nothing.

MR. SPEAKER: Let there be no further provocation. There is enough trouble for me. Do not provoke him. He is cooperating with me fully. Please do not provoke him.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, ADDA has given Rs. 50 lakh for the rehabilitation of people in four villages. People of three villages have already been rehabilitated and, in the fourth village, from where the people had to be rehabilitated, the work is in progress. However, what is required is that more funds should be sanctioned and this issue should be treated as a national problem.

Due to this alarming situation in the coal mining area, people are spending sleepless nights, and they are unable to sleep at nights. I have seen smoke emitting from the floor; I have seen cracks on the roof and on the walls. One hundred and seventy families whose houses have developed cracks and subsidence have not yet been properly rehabilitated. The Minister has stated that temporary rehabilitation has been done, but proper rehabilitation of these 170 families should be done at the earliest.

Sir, plan should be made for another 400 families who are still residing in the endangered places. They are passing sleepless nights. As the plan was prepared 12 years back, the estimate was made 12 years back, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government will appoint an Expert Committee to conduct a detailed survey of the entire Raniganj coal fields area and submit a report to the Government; and whether sufficient fund will be provided for tackling this problem. Will steps be taken in a time-bound manner to rehabilitate people living in places declared as endangered? Will the Government provide a time-bound plan for rehabilitation of people in the entire area that has been declared unsafe and endangered? Will a time-bound plan be prepared to tackle this situation?

MR. SPEAKER: There is one request from Shri Gurudas Dasgupta. Shri Dasgupta, only one question please.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA (PANSKURA): Sir, the unfortunate thing is that subsidence in the area is not affecting only a single village, as my esteemed friend has said, but subsidence has a wider dimension and the danger is of much wider nature. It may affect the Durgapur Steel Complex area, it may affect the Andol Railway Complex, and it may affect the economy of the entire region, thereby affecting the lives of maybe crores of people. This issue has been pending with the Government of India for a long time. We have been raising this issue in the other House also. Government is known for undue delay in taking any positive action to put down the fire that is destroying our precious national wealth and endangering life and industry. Therefore, my pointed question to the hon. Minister is, what is the time-frame that he will give before this august House within which the Government will try to tackle the problem of continuous fires, will take steps to prevent subsidence, and organise rehabilitation.

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: Sir, we are very much concerned about the issue. We have already taken measures in this regard. As the hon. Member has said, after the incident had taken place, on the very next day, ECL and Asansol-Durgapur Development Authority, which is the agency notified by the Government of West Bengal, have actually identified 24 houses, and they were allotted 24 sites. However, none of them shifted because nobody is interested in shifting. I myself have visited Jharia in BCCL. We are prepared to provide rehabilitation. Government allocation is also there.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Mr. Minister, entire villages were shifted to new sites. It seems you have no information about that. It is not a fact that people are not willing to shift.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Acharia, you do not have to give him information, he has to give you information.

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: Regarding funds, adequate funds have been provided. In the entire ECL area, 15,000 families are going to be affected which means, nearly 86,735 people are involved. We have allocated the a budget of Rs.411.84 crore for stabilisation, Rs.1317.18 crore for rehabilitation, Rs.33.22 crore for fire effected and unsafe areas. The total comes to about Rs.1769.51 crore. ...(*Interruptions*). This is about the entire ECL. I am coming to Sanctoria.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I am talking of the entire ECL.

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: We are concerned about the entire ECL. Recently, we have constituted a committee, with the Secretary as the Chairman, in which the West Bengal ARDA is also participating. Two meetings were conducted this year. After taking this issue into consideration on 23rd of this month, we are going to convene another meeting to resolve the problem. We are very much concernedâ€¦ ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : My question was about the expert committee and not the committee by Secretary and ARDA. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: No running commentary.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member wanted to know whether you would like to constitute an expert committee to consider the entire problem. Just say `yes' or `no'.

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: I am coming to that point, Sir. Where stabilisation has to be effected, we are taking care of stabilisation; where rehabilitation is necessary, we are taking care of rehabilitation. Actually, we are thinking of constituting a committee. As you said, we will have a look at it, consider the issue and definitely we will come back to you.

MR. SPEAKER: There are two other points.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, I am trying to help you all. I am also sitting here sometimes to help you. Mr. Minister, there was a question as to whether the Government is going to review the estimate, as to how much time will be taken for completing the work, including putting off the fire.

DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO: We can take a relook at that. We will sit, consider and get back to you within a week, in writing.

MR. SPEAKER: You may call Shri Dasgupta and Shri Acharia and explain it.
