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Title: Shri Basudeb Acharia called the attention of the Minister of Coal on the situation arising out of subsidence of land in entire coal belt in Asansol, Jharia and Raniganj and action taken by the Government in this regard.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): Sir, I have a Statement here. I can lay the Statement on the Table of the House.

\* Sir, the incidents of fire and land subsidence in old mined out areas of Jharia coalfield of Jharkhand and Raniganj coalfield of West Bengal are caused due to 200 years of un-scientific mining carried out by the erstwhile mine owners during pre-nationalization period. These are being addressed by the Government and the coal companies continuously.

\*â€¦\* Laid on the Table and also Placed in Library, See No. LT 8593/08.

The population on the old mining areas has increased many times over the years, though these areas became unsafe for habitation and declared so from time to time by the authorities. Keeping the significance of the issue in view, Government of India had constituted a High Level Committee in December, 1996 under the chairmanship of the then Secretary, Ministry of Coal (MOC) with representatives from other departments, coal companies and the State Governments of West Bengal and Bihar to deal with the problem in a comprehensive manner. Based on their recommendations, a Master Plan to deal with the problems of fire and subsidence control and related rehabilitation was formulated covering areas under the jurisdiction of Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) and Eastern Coalfields Ltd. (ECL) in 1999 for implementation of the same in a phased manner.

Ministry of Coal has taken up implementation of some schemes identified under the Master Plan through budgetary support simultaneously. Two demonstration schemes for rehabilitation were also approved in 1998 for relocation of people from endangered areas both in BCCL and ECL. For BCCL the demonstration scheme for Rs.61.09 crores involved construction of 4600 houses comprising of 1500 houses for BCCL employees and 3100 houses for private persons. Out of this, 344 houses for BCCL employees have been constructed and 204 families have been shifted. Construction of 1156 number of houses is being tendered. For non-BCCL people 900 houses for private persons are nearing completion and construction of 1452 houses are under progress. Action is underway for construction of remaining houses. Rs. 21.30 crores have been spent for this scheme at BCCL.

For ECL areas a demonstration scheme for rehabilitation (1123 houses, Rs.32.52 crore) covering four locations in ECL area has been taken up by Asansol Durgapur Development Authority (ADDA). In addition, because of urgency a new site namely Sanctoria Village has also been taken up for rehabilitation.

Apart from the above two rehabilitation schemes, 33 schemes (29 for subsidence control and four for fire control) were taken up in BCCL and ECL areas. Out of the above 17 schemes have been completed and 16 schemes are in progress. Rs.59.62 crores have been spent for these schemes till date.

The Master Plan initially provided for stabilization of certain endangered areas. As per the directives from Hon'ble Supreme Court a study was conducted in 2005 by a Committee including the Director General of Mines Safety as a member which opined that stabilization is not a permanent solution for the endangered areas and evacuation is the only solution for the safety of people

and property. The Master Plan has been thus revised in August, 2006 providing for rehabilitation of people from unstable locations, dealing with fire and diversion of railway lines and road within a time span of ten years instead of earlier proposed 20 years. Expenditure estimated for Raniganj and Jharia Master Plans is Rs. 2300.42 crore and Rs.6358.45 crore respectively.

The components of Master Plan were submitted to Jharkhand and West Bengal Governments in November, and December, 2006 respectively for expeditious consideration. Committee of Secretaries considered the Master Plan for BCCL and ECL in its meeting held on 9.8.07 and directed that Ministry of Coal should go ahead to obtain approval of State Governments of Jharkhand and West Bengal on the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R & R) package in the Master Plan. While Government of West Bengal has conveyed their acceptance to the proposed R&R package with some modifications, the acceptance of State Government of Jharkhand for the proposed R&R package is awaited. Master Plan for Raniganj Coalfield is being processed at the Ministry for obtaining approval from competent authority.

The Master Plan proposed is involving huge rehabilitation plan. A total of 98,134 houses in BCCL area and 33,196 houses in ECL area are to be rehabilitated. The affected population is proposed to be resettled in 4 to 5 satellite townships each for Raniganj and Jharia on non-coal bearing areas along the periphery of Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields. Suitable rehabilitation package has been worked out in consultation with local authorities of the respective State Governments.

Jharia Rehabilitation and Development Authority (JRDA) in Jharkhand and Asansol Durgapur Development Authority (ADDA) in West Bengal have been identified for implementation of the programme and coal companies will provide all the technical support required by these organizations for implementing the schemes.

The outlay for the scheme is proposed to be funded by the central Government and Coal India Limited.

The Government is fully aware of the situation in these areas and is taking step to alleviate the problem with the help of the two State Governments. Effective implementation of the Master Plan would require active involvement of the respective State Governments and local authorities.

I am grateful to the Hon'ble Speaker for giving me this opportunity to place on record the action being taken by the Government and also to the Hon'ble members for their concern about the matter of subsidence and related issues. \*

...(व्यवधान)

**श्री प्रभुनाथ सिंह :** अध्यक्ष महोदय, आपने हमें बोलने का मौका नहीं दिया।...(व्यवधान)

**अध्यक्ष महोदय:** अकार्डिंग टू रूल्स ऐसे नहीं होता है। इसमें 15-20 मिनट लगेंगे।

**श्री प्रभुनाथ सिंह :** अध्यक्ष महोदय, आपने कहा था कि हम आपको बोलने का मौका देंगे।...(व्यवधान)

**अध्यक्ष महोदय:** हमें तब साद नहीं था कि आज कार्डिंग अटेंशन है।

...(व्यवधान)

**श्री प्रभुनाथ सिंह :** इसे जीरो ऑवर के बाद करवा लीजिए।...(व्यवधान)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, subsidence and fire in the Jharia and Raniganj coal mines area is a national disaster. It is a national problem.[\[R3\]](#)

It is not a problem pertaining to a particular area. A lot of people are involved in it. People are spending sleepless nights because

in every week, some incidents take place in that area. Last year, I visited one area near Dhanbad, Gidhore colliery. At 12 o'clock in the night, there was a subsidence and 25 houses belonging to the contract workers, who were engaged by BCCL in its mines, went inside the ground. Five persons were killed and hundreds were rendered homeless by this. This is not a single incident. A few months back, near Nimcha colliery, in Eastern Coal Fields in West Bengal, there was subsidence and deaths were also reported. One year back, there was subsidence in National Highway no. 2. Traffic was suspended for a few days. The entire area was affected due to unscientific mining done under private management. Sand-stowing was also not properly done, particularly in BCCL managed area. Contractors got their bill, but without doing the sand stowing. Even, a number of incidents have taken place in these areas. The Government is quite indifferent. The Calling Attention regarding this was to be taken up on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2007. Then, it could not be taken up because the House was adjourned. On that day also, a statement was circulated and today also – although a new Minister has taken over the Ministry now - the same statement with same words, same commas and same full stops has been circulated.

MR. SPEAKER: They cannot be going on changing the statements.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : This shows how the Government is indifferent. So, for nine months, there have not been any steps.

MR. SPEAKER: This is a very elaborate statement. Put your questions now. Please put your clarifications now.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : They have not taken any steps. A number of Committees were constituted starting from Gugnani Committee and Bagchi Committee. Then, in 1999, for the first time, a comprehensive Master Plan was prepared.

**अध्यक्ष महोदय :** आप वचैश्चन पूछिए।

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I am coming to the question. This is a very serious situation.

MR. SPEAKER: Rules are also very specific regarding this.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I know only two Members are there and this is a question of lakhs of people.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Leaders of parties are waiting to raise very important matters. I cannot make them wait for long.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : In 1999, for the first time, a Comprehensive Master Plan was prepared and 77 sites were identified in BCCL. [\[MSOffice4\]](#)

Some sites were also identified in ECL, but no action was taken by the Government on the Master Plan. Then, that Master Plan was updated in 2004 and as there was no perceptible action taken by the Ministry of Coal, that Master Plan was again updated in 2006. This covers two aspects dealing with fire which includes identification of fire, prioritisation for implementation and assessment of tentative earth requirement and also rehabilitation and resettlement of the affected people from the areas affected by fire and subsidence including identification of resettlement sites.

MR. SPEAKER: Please put your question now.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : But even after updating the Master Plan in 2006 there was no perceptible action taken by the Government.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Acharia, if you do not put your specific questions, I will not allow any Call Attention in future. The Minister has given a very elaborate statement. Please come to the question.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, I am coming to the question. The situation prevailing in those areas is very serious.

MR. SPEAKER: I have allowed this because it is serious, but you cannot go on speaking without putting your questions.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : The Eastern Coalfields Limited has already submitted its Master Plan a few days ago, but the Minister has not mentioned it in his statement. The Government of West Bengal has cleared the Master Plan, but the Government of Jharkhand is yet to clear the Master Plan.

Sir, as the situation is very grave and as the Ministry has already received the updated Master Plan from ECL, I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government will take prompt action to implement the recommendations and suggestions contained in the Master Plan for tackling subsidence and fire in coal mines area of ECL.

Secondly, I would also like to know whether the Government of India will take up the matter with the Government of Jharkhand

to get the BCCL's Master Plan cleared expeditiously so as to earnestly tackle the fire and subsidence both in Jharia and Raniganj coal mines area.

Sir, there are two major towns in that area.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Acharia, I am sorry I have to remind you again that the rules are very clear that you can only put questions.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, this is my last question.

Sir, Jharia has a population of four to five lakhs and Raniganj also has a population of four to five lakhs. Both these towns are very old and important towns. The 'Save Jharia Committee' is struggling for the last few years to save the town of Jharia. So, I would like to know whether effective steps would be taken by the Government to save these two towns by sand stowing and by not allowing extraction of coal in these two towns. [R5] S[r6]o that the huge population of these two towns is not required to be rehabilitated.

My last point is that one German company...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: No please. I will not allow this. Only these three questions and no more!

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, one German company has submitted a proposal to tackle the fire without dislocation of the population. They have already submitted their proposal...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: No, sorry. I will not allow this. Do not record it.

*(Interruptions) â€¦\**

MR. SPEAKER: I am very sorry. You are misusing the opportunity.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, I would like to know whether the Government will consider their proposal so that some area may be identified...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I will have to very seriously consider whether I should allow any Call Attention in future.

*... (Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Acharia, please cooperate.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, I would like to know whether the Government will consider their proposal to tackle the fire...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: No, this is not being recorded. Do not record it.

*(Interruptions) â€¦\**

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry, I have to remind all the hon. Members here. Many of them are very senior Members. The rule categorically provides for only clarifications. This is not a discussion. There shall be no debate on such statement at the time it is made, but each Member, in whose name the Item stands in the List of Business, may, with the permission of the Speaker, ask a clarificatory question and the Minister shall reply at the end to solve such questions. Everybody knows this.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, I have asked only clarifications.

MR. SPEAKER: No, clarification does not mean that you can give a speech for

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\* Not recorded.

ten minutes. Please see that it has gone on for 20 minutes. Please cooperate. Shri Adhir Chowdhury, you are a very law abiding citizen, you should follow the rules.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Sir, but I should not be given step-motherly treatment...*(Interruptions)*

Sir, the hon. Minister has given a very elaborate statement.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, I think, a very elaborate statement has been given by the hon. Minister.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Sir, it is a well known fact that sub-terranean fire has been raging in the Jharia and Raniganj coal field areas over the years. Even the fire has been leaping out on the ground. It has been threatening the Kolkata-Delhi Railway line, National Highway – II and even Indian Oil Corporation pipeline.

Sir, the hon. Member, Shri Basudeb Acharia, in spite of his full knowledge, has cleverly skipped the issue of illegal mining. Illegal mining has been continuing on with impunity in the Eastern Coal Field area and Jharkhand area also (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: That part will be deleted. That part will not be recorded. Please come to the question or otherwise, I will stop the matter. I will discontinue it. You have to put a question, please.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Sir, the other day also I was denied to ask the supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Chowdhury, it is very easy to make allegation.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Sir, the reason is that a Task Force has been set up in both the States.

MR. SPEAKER: Anybody can make allegations.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : But, it is also a fact that illegal mining has been continuing and that has become a major problem to restrict the subsidence and fire.

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\* Not recorded.

MR. SPEAKER: Put your question.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Sir, the hon. Minister has not defined the area which is vulnerable for subsidence and fire.

MR. SPEAKER: Very well, no Call Attention in future.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Sir, there is also no mention of the number of population which has been affected by the subsidence and fire.

Sir, earlier also the Standing Committee has suggested a closer plan for those mines which are abandoned.

MR. SPEAKER: If you do not put a question, I will discontinue this matter.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Sir, I would like to know whether that closer plan has been implemented or not.

Sir, I have found some discrepancies in the statement. Can I refer them?

MR. SPEAKER: Please refer them in the form of a question. You are allowed to ask one question, but you may put two questions.[\[r7\]](#)

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Sir, you also kindly see the Statement. It says:

"For BCCL, the demonstration scheme for Rs. 61.09 crore involved construction of 4,600 houses comprising of 1,500 houses for BCCL employees and 3,100 houses for private persons. Out of this, 344 houses for BCCL employees have been constructed and 204 families have been shifted."

There is a serious discrepancy which occurred between the construction of houses and shifting of families.

Secondly, for ECL area, no figure has been provided to know about the actual number of houses shifted.

Sir, the Master Plan, which has been referred to here, had been prepared long ago, since the Gugnani Committee Report. At that time it was suggested to divert the railway line and also to shift the entire habitation areas. But till date, the progress is going on in a very lackadaisical manner. That is why, the demonstration programme and other measures have not been able to yield a

tangible result. My pointed question to the hon. Minister is this. How much population and how much area in West Bengal have become vulnerable due to subsidence of land and fire?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, what I find is that my hon. Colleagues, Shri Basu Deb Acharia and Shri Adhir Chowdhury have not only asked questions but they have also replied to those questions themselves. They are very conversant with the whole problem, and I appreciate that. I can elaborate everything further but I will try to be precise.

What is 'subsidence'? Mining is taking place for more than 200 years. Shri Basu Deb Acharia himself mentioned that unscientific mining was done by people before the nationalization of these companies. Now, those mining will naturally attract subsidence. Sir, I have got a complete plan, and I can show it to Shri Basu Deb Acharia, and I can take him to my office and explain to him further on this. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: You take both Shri Basu Deb Acharia and Shri Adhir Chowdhury.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Sir, I do not want to take the time of the House. At the time of mining, when the corridors were made, the places were vacant. You may try to stabilize every corridor by putting sand in it but there is no scientific method by which we can make this stabilization possible. After all these efforts, it has been decided that stabilization could not be taken for granted. It is for this reason the Government has now made this Master Plan. Under the Master Plan, evacuation is the only choice.

Shri Basu Deb Acharia has himself mentioned that the Government of Jharkhand has not approved this in six months. What do we do? Our hon. Prime Minister has himself talked to the Chief Minister and still the approval has not come. The West Bengal Government has already approved it, and we have already started taking action. There is no shortage of funds. We are willing to make enough funds available for this evacuation. There are more than 90,000 houses. This is under the Master Plan. I would request the hon. Ministers to help us â€¦ *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Thank you, Sir. I would request the hon. Members to help us. We are taking the help of NGOs and we are taking the help of all the leaders in the area for motivating the people who have been affected. I fully agree that they are living in a very dangerous situation. When this mining was done, at that time nobody was living there. After that, when population increased, people started building houses. With the pressure on land, population has come there. From our side, we can only give them new houses. In the new place we are willing to build up the entire infrastructure – schools, colleges and roads. [\[H8\]](#)

But the first important thing is that these people should be motivated to leave their places, which they are not doing, and on which we have no control. The Government is very, very sensitive on this issue. On humanitarian basis, we do not want them to be there.

The other point, which the hon. Member, Mr Acharia mentioned was about the updated plan, which the ECL has received. That plan has been received; there is no problem. He also mentioned about the safe Jharia town. Let me inform the hon. Member that as far as the Jharia town is concerned, there is no risk involved in it. All these problems are on the periphery, around the Jharia town. So, there is no risk in the Jharia town.

So, you can relax, Mr. hon. Member.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : What about Raniganj?

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: I am talking about Jharia town.

About Raniganj, of course, you did not ask the question by the way. But now, since you are asking, I would reply to you.

MR. SPEAKER: It is all right.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I had asked about both Raniganj and Jharia.

SHRU SANTOSH BAGRODIA: As regards Raniganj, the problem is the same, which I mentioned. Raniganj would definitely take care of. Mining has been done below the Raniganj town. The problem is there. But we are willing to shift all of them. If you can help us, if you can motivate these people who are living there, we would be grateful. You know what is their mindset. They do

not want to shift.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, you have mentioned it in your written statement also.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: I have definitely given a very elaborate statement so that less questions probably come into reference...*(Interruptions)*

Sir, it is very easy to say 'shift them'. We are willing to shift them. As I said, there is no shortage of funds. But can you shift even one man? Let me inform the hon. Members that 344 houses have been actually built. Would you believe that we could fill up only 204? There are still 140 houses, which have not been used. We are concerned about the safety of those houses if people do not shift there.

You fix up as to who are the people who are going to shift. We would make arrangements for them.

Sir, as far as the question of fire is concerned, which Mr. Acharia had mentioned as to why does fire take place. The moment there is subsidence, there is a crack; and when the crack is there, the wind goes in. With the combination of wind and crack, there can be a natural fire. Once the fire takes place, it becomes very difficult to identify the level of fire, the fire goes up to what depth, up to what distance. It is for this reason that the only choice is evacuation. The only choice is rehabilitation. And, we have a very large plan.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Our Prime Minister is very sensitive to this. He wants the safety of people. We do not want to lose even a single citizen of our country. Those days are over when the lives of the citizens were considered very cheap. Today, our Government considers the life of every citizen very valuable. We will not let them die.

But as far as we are concerned, we are willing to help. Please come forward...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: It is his maiden performance. We do not disturb a Minister giving his maiden performance. Please follow the tradition. Generally, that is the custom here.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Sir, whatever help you want, we are willing to help.

Sir, Mr. Chowdhury wanted to know about fires. Let me inform him that there were totally 67 fires, which we inherited when the mines were nationalized. After that, we had 10 more fires. Seven fires have been completely defused; 67 fires are still going on but we have contained them. The risk is minimal. I would not say that there is no risk; the risk is still there. That is why again the question of evacuation comes in there.

Sir, Mr. Chowdhury also wanted to know about Eastern Coalfield.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : How much area would be there?...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: No Supplementary is allowed. Mr. Minister, do not ask for further Supplementary, please.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: I am not asking, Sir. I am only trying to reply...*(Interruptions)*

The salient features of the master plan are fillings, fires, subsidence, rehabilitation in the leasehold of ECL, which was updated as on August, 2006 on the agenda. The number of sites proposed to be rehabilitated including ongoing schemes is 139; the number of houses to be rehabilitated is 33,196; the number of houses proposed to be rehabilitated in phase-I including the ongoing houses is 18,136; the number of houses proposed to be rehabilitated in phase-II is 15,060. The total number of such houses is 33,196. [\[r9\]](#)

The estimated land required for rehabilitation is 896.29 hectares. Timeframe for implementation is 10 years. It was 20 years. It has been brought down to 10 years.

MR. SPEAKER: You said that you would invite them and give all those information. You invite the hon. Members.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you say, I invite not only both of them but I also invite every individual in the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Every hon. Member in the House.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: If any of the hon. Members comes, I will, on top priority, meet him and give all the explanation about these problems which we are facing in the coalfields.

MR. SPEAKER: I compliment you on your maiden intervention.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Thank you very much, Sir.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : How much is the area in West Bengal?

MR. SPEAKER: No, do not reply further.

...(Interruptions)

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MR. SPEAKER: Now, let us come to important issues.

Shri Prabhunath Singh