

MR. SPEAKER : He has already replied, What is the point in giving this thing ?

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : It has been wrongly replied. Will the Minister make the record straight ?

MR. SPEAKER : You come under Rule 115.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : I only wanted to know whether the Minister will make the record straight and say what is possible and what is mineable reserve and what is the cost of the nickel at CIL and what is the cost at which we can produce.

MR. SPEAKER : He need not reply. He has already said it is thrice the price of imported nickel.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : You must protect me.

MR. SPEAKER : I am protecting the interest of the House as well.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : I mean he has given this wrongly. He should correct it. That is my point.

MR. SPEAKER : I do not know whether you are wrong or he is wrong. This thing has to be decided.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : What is the price of nickel...

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE : This is the usual trouble with our hon. friend who is a Doctor or a Doctorate holder.

MR. SPEAKER : Then you are accustomed to this.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : Sometimes, therefore, knowledge becomes confusion when it is not fully matched.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : I hope he does not diagnose his patient's illness like this.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : I never claimed to be an expert. I go by the information given to me. I am told that there is some such thing as a cut-off point of the value of nickel and it is measured at those levels and therefore, at 0.7 per cent it is taken as the cut-off point. Then they say, 'here is a total likelihood—that is what is estimated', from that what is the probable thing, and then what is proved ultimately is

the result that can be commercially exploited. So, I have given these figures. What is proved today is 18.17 and that is of Grade 1.12, and therefore, as I have said, when we went through—I do not want to waste the time of the House—all agencies, national and international have been consulted and ultimately....

MR. SPEAKER : Why don't you consult Dr. Bhoi ?

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE : I can tell my hon. friend that if he wants, I can give all the information to him.

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI : One point that emerges is....*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : Could a mistake not have been committed at that time.

[English]

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI : One point that emerges is, when the foundation was laid, whether all these things were looked into.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : There are many things that take place before laying of foundation.

[English]

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI : When the Government of India laid the foundation whether all these things were looked into.

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE : We cannot be held responsible always for foundation.

(Interruptions)

Illegal Mining of Coal

*697. SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA : Will the Minister of STEEL, MINES AND COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether millions of tonnes of high grade coal are trapped in the pillars of some collieries from which the most easily minable coal had been extracted by private owners;

(b) if so, the reasons why it had been allowed and who was responsible for that;

(c) whether the extraction as above has resulted in underground fires in Jharia Coal fields; and

(d) the steps Government have taken to control the above situation ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL, MINES AND COAL (SHRI VASANT SATHE) : (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). The bord and pillar method of mining has traditionally been followed in the under-ground mining of coal in India. However, prior to nationalisation of coal mines, there was a tendency on the part of erstwhile mine owners to do selective mining. As a result, sizable reserves of coal used to be left in pillars. In many cases, due to such unscientific extraction of pillars, a number of fires started on account of spontaneous heating of coal pillars left in the worked-out areas.

(d) After nationalisation, several steps have taken to control existing fires and to ensure that further fires do not occur. Seventeen projects with a total investment of Rs. 104.32 crores for dealing with these fires have already been prepared. Out of these, 15 projects with a total investment of Rs. 70.79 crores have already been sanctioned which are in various stages of implementation.

In addition, as a part of an overall Master Plan for Reconstruction of Jharia Coalfield, such mining methods are being introduced in the underground mines which will enable maximum extraction of coal reserves so as to minimise chances of fire in the mined out areas.

[Translation]

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, you had directed that hon. Member should neither read out any written speech nor any written question, but today all the answers to the questions have been given in the form of Statement. In all the cases it has been stated—

[English]

'A Statement is laid on the Table of the House'.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : Had these all been read out, what would have been your position ?

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA : Why should they give written answer to a small question ? A good Government or a good Ministry is that which is capable of shifting its responsible for mistakes on others efficiently! That is why such answers are given. They say that before nationalisation of coal mines, the mines used to catch fire because the private owners did not work scientifically and systematically. They used to leave coal-pillars in the mines. Was there no law at that time which could have been enforced to prevent the mines from catching fire ?

The second question that arises is this. What effective steps have so far been taken by Government after nationalisation to prevent fire in mines; what are the names of such mines; when were such steps taken and what was the amount spent in respect of each mine ? I would also like to know whether even today fire is raging in the Jharia coal mine which is causing loss to Government, and if so, the reasons therefor ?

AN HON. MEMBER : Fire is raging even today.

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA : The hon. Member says that even today the fire is raging.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : If they are not on fire, you go and set them on fire.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have given a written reply to the question for the satisfaction of the hon. Member. In spite of that he is not satisfied.

MR. SPEAKER : It has rather become a cause for dissatisfaction.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : That is the difficulty. What is the way out ? But all the points he has raised just now have been answered in my reply to the main question. All the information as to what used to happen earlier and why it was not being done earlier has been made available in that answer. We nationalised the coal mines in 1973 and he now wants its *post-mortem*. Shri Daga wants me to discuss as to what was

the law prevailing at that time and why that was not being done at that time and all that. . . (*Interruptions*) Either he should sit down and listen to me or I sit down.

MR. SPEAKER : It will be better if both of you sit down ! We shall be able to take up some other work.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : The coal mine-owners had been operating mines illegally which resulted in losses to the country and, therefore, the mines were nationalised. After nationalisation, the number of coalmines is about 711. Regarding fire in the Jharia coal-belt, we have tried to control it in whatever way it was possible. We find that such mines number about 45. We have provided funds and they are being spent for extinguishing the fire. At 15 places, the fire has been brought under control and operations are still on. We believe that we shall be able to control the fire in the next 5 to 6 years. It is true that we have suffered some loss on this account.

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA : The following newsitem has appeared on page 4 of 'The Statesman' dt. 10th April :

[*English*]

"MOUNTAINS OF COAL UP IN SMOKE

Every year coal worth several crores of rupees goes in smoke due to poor production planning of the public sector coal industry.

CIL Companies on March, 31, had 29.8 million tonnes of pit-head stocks worth Rs. 700 crores. Many of such dumps are on fire."

[*Translation*]

Here, the pit-head stocks are on fire. I have quoted from *The Statesman* dated 10th April. What preventive measures are you taking ?

SHRI VASANT SATHE : Earlier, the question was asked why fire was raging in the underground mines. I have made it clear in my reply to the question and now also here that when the coal stocks pick-up, the mines catch fire due to internal combustion. Now, that the coal stock at our pit-heads has piled up in huge quantity, some of the coal is burning. This statement I have

made. The solution for this is the movement of coal. This we are trying. . . (*Interruptions*) I do not want to shift responsibility to any other Ministry. We have coollective responsibility. I am prepared to send Shri Daga to put out the fire but I am afraid, that is not going to help, it may have an adverse effect. We have held meetings with the power houses, who are our major consumers, with their Ministry and with the officials of the Railway Ministry. All of us have been meeting constantly and sorting out the problems.

[*English*]

The power houses are the major consumers. Even in such sectors we have succeeded in solving their problem of transportation to some extent. This is the best way to solve this problem.

[*Translation*]

SHRI LALITESHWAR SHAHI : I would like to know two things in this connection, first, whether the fire by combustion is raging in the BCL areas or in the open coalmine areas from where coal is sent to power houses. Secondly, so far as BCL is concerned, I would like to know the quantity of coal taken out after nationalisation, from the pillars which were cut at the seams at the time of extracting coal and the extent to which sand has been filled in those pillars.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : Figures about the quantity of coal taken out and sand filled in every mine are not available with me but after nationalisation, the policy is that it should be ensured that no mine should catch fire. We make a provision for this.

[*English*]

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : This is not a laughing matter. It is a very serious question. And this is a very poor reflection, I must say, on the Coal India and the Ministry. It should be a news to the people of this country that, for the last ten years or more, our precious coal deposits have been on fire. I want to know from the hon. Minister precisely as to what is the total loss suffered by the country. In view of the fact that there is scarcity of coal all around and very poor quality of coal is being supplied to our power stations, I want to know what safety measures have been taken and why this matter has not been tackled on an emergency basis when thousands of tonnes of coal are

being burnt. Within a radius of about 100 kilometres in Jharia coal belt, fire has been raging for the last ten years. I am shocked to know the way the Ministry has handled, the Coal India has handled, this crisis. This House would like to know in precise terms what steps were taken and what steps the Minister is going to take in future to bring to an end this crisis—I call it a crisis. This should be tackled on an emergency basis.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : He has already replied to it.

[English]

SHRI VASANT SATHE : We have never taken this question in a lighter vein. I strongly refute the allegation of the hon. Member that it is being treated lightly or that Government has not taken adequate steps. After nationalisation, we took steps; on'y we provided money but we have brought it under control. I have given the details. I can pass it on. I need not take the time of the House. . .

MR. SPEAKER : It is alright.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : Cutting of trenches by heavy earthmoving equipment to isolate fires; filling of developed galleries below the ground; hydraulic sand stowing/ hydro-pneumatic stowing; fly ash flushing, inert gas injection. . .

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : What is the result ?

SHRI VASANT SATHE : The result is that it has been brought down.

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : Fire is still raging.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : It has been going on for 50 years. Even the best scientists know this. If there is inert gas, by internal thing, it catches up. Coal is an inflammable thing. These are gassy mines. It is not that, by just wishing, the fires can be extinguished. This is the job of scientists. No one should take it lightly, and making light remarks, in a cavalier manner, will not extinguish the fire.

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : I strongly protest against the way the Minister is twisting it. You may refute. But this is a reflection on the functions of the Ministry. . . (Interruptions) I want to know why steps were not taken to extinguish the fire. . .

MR. SPEAKER : Let us not have a fire in the House now.

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : What is the result ? We are interested in knowing the result and not in your mere detailing of what you have done.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : They are coming down. This is the result. I have said so.

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : How much control have you been able to achieve ? You should say that.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : 50 per cent has been achieved. I have said so. Sir, he has not cared to read the reply; he just comes to the House, jumps up and says such things.

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : Sir, on a point of procedure. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Do not get agitated.

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : A written reply is placed on the Table of the House. A serious Minister goes into all the aspects and he replies to all the points raised. Merely placing a statement will not satisfy the House.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : The written replies are made available. He should have read the whole reply before putting his questions.

PROF. K. K. TEWARY : That is not the Gita which everybody will go and read. You will have to reply to every detail.

SHRI VASANT SATHE : I have no doubt that he has not read even the Gita.

MR. SPEAKER : Question Hour is over.