

LOK SABHA

Friday, April 12, 1985/Chaitra 22, 1907
(Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

MEMBER SWORN

[English]

Shrimati Dil Kumari Bhandari (Sikkim)

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : One more addition to the Opposition.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD : Semi-Opposition.

MR. SPEAKER : She is on my side.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : More and more Chief Ministers are sending their wives to the House.

MR. SPEAKER : I think, they are monopolising the representation.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : I, hope, their relations are becoming sweeter and sweeter.

MR. SPEAKER : You were one of them.

SHRI G. G. SWELL : No chance of his becoming a Chief Minister.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Fire in Durgapur Steel Plant

*406. SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY† :
SHRI S. M. BHATTAM :

Will the Minister of STEEL, MINES AND COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether a big fire broke out in the Durgapur Steel Plant on 16 March, 1985;

(b) if so, the area of the plant affected by fire;

(c) the items that have been burnt and damaged by the fire;

(d) the estimated loss as a result thereof;

(e) the causes of the fire; and

(f) whether any enquiry has been conducted in the matter and responsibility fixed for the outbreak of the fire ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STEEL (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH) : (a) to (f). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b). On 16th March, 1985 a fire broke out in the storage yard of M/s. Elektrim M/s. Desein and M/s. Crompton Greaves Limited-contractors engaged in the construction of the 2 × 60 MW Captive Power Plant at Durgapur Steel Plant. The open storage yard of the contractors near the construction site was affected by the fire.

(c) Based on a preliminary report submitted by M/s. Elektrim-M/s. Desein and M/s. Crompton Greaves 398 tonnes of equipment of M/s. Elektrim-M/s. Desein consisting of items of turbogenerator, electrical equipments, instruments, boiler, electrostatic precipitator, electrical cables and spares and 700 tonnes of equipment of M/s. Crompton Greaves, consisting of power cables, control cables, control panels and other accessories are reported to have been damaged by the fire.

(d) All the plant and equipment for the captive power plant are under the custody and direct responsibility of the contractors and are insured till erection and handing over to Durgapur Steel Plant. The contractors have indicated that their preliminary/provisional assesment of damage is Rs. 4.87 crores to M/s. Elektrim-M/s. Desein and Rs. 6

crores to M/s. Crompton Greaves. However, a final assessment of damage would be known only after they submit their claims to the Insurance Companies.

(e) The enquiry committee could not establish any definite cause of the fire.

(f) Yes, Sir. The contractors have been held responsible for the out break of fire.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : Sir, the statement is conspicuously vague in some matters. You are aware that nearly the entire country and, Particulary, West Bengal, is plagued with power crisis. Here, the captive power plant for the Durgapur Steel Plant was being constructed; suddenly a fire broke out and the entire machinery was damaged. As per the preliminary enquiry, the loss is to the tune of Rs 10.87 crores. As yet the final estimate has not been made.

In reply to part (e) of the Question, it is stated :

“The enquiry committee could not establish any definite cause of fire.”

Now, a fire breaks out, the property worth Rs. 10.87 crores is damaged in an area where nearly the entire country and, particularly, West Bengal and the Durgapur Steel Plant is plagued with power crisis and it is stated that the enquiry committee could not establish the cause of fire.

Again, part (f) of my Question reads :

“whether any enquiry has been conducted in the matter and responsibility fixed for the outbreak of the fire.”

In reply to that, the answer is :

“Yes, Sir. The contractors have been held responsible for the outbreak of fire.”

My first question is, if the enquiry committee could not establish any definite cause of fire, how do they hold the contractors responsible for the outbreak of fire ?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : I am grateful to the hon. Member for the interest he has taken in this matter. We fully share his concern about the outbreak of fire in this particular Plant. It is not the first time it has happened. This is the third fire that has broken out :

Now as far as the plant is concerned, there is no damage whatsoever to the Durgapur Steel Plant. The fire broke out in the stockyard which belongs to the two contractors M/s. Electrim/M/s. Desein and M/s. crompton and greavers who are the contractors of Durgapur Steel Plant.

Now the first thing that I did When I learnt about the occurrence of this fire was to ask the Secretary of the Department, Shri Khosla and the Chairman of the Steel Authority of India to proceed to the site with a team, within 24 hours. They went there and the enquiry has not been able to find out the cause of the fire although we know that the first fire was caused by welding sparks and the second was a case of sabotage.

In this particular matter, what worried us was that previous Committees had made some recommendations and these recommendations are tabulated here. If the hon. Member likes, I could give the to him. Unfortunately, the recommendations were not implemented. We have asked the contractor as to why this is not done also why the management did not pursue this particular matter.

With regard to the loss, again the loss is not to the Government. The loss is to the two contractors. There is loss of equipments. We have been assured that it would be supplemented very shortly and there will be no conspicuous delay in regard to the completion of the plant.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : My second question is, as hon. Minister has himself said this is not the first time. This is the third time. Two enquiries revealed that at least one fire was due to sabotage. Although the loss is not to the Durgapur Steel Plant, it is a loss to the entire country. It is a loss of equipments, delay etc.

So my specific question is whether the Government suspects any conspiracy to subvert and delay the power plants in my area wherever we require captive power for development purposes.

Another question I would like to put is why the recommendations made by the previous Committee have not been implemented by the Durgapur Steel Plant and what action has been taken by you for their

failure to make the contractors adhere to the recommendations made by the previous Committee.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : I have already replied to this point earlier. First of all, in this particular case we have no evidence as of any conspiracy or planned sabotage. If anything comes to light, we will take the House into confidence.

As I said earlier, we are ourselves quite concerned with the recommendations of the Committees in 1983 and 1984 which were not taken seriously by the contractors. Then we have asked the management to find out as to who was responsible for not following this up. On receipt of this information, necessary action will be taken against the concerned officers. We take a serious view of this particular occurrence. There were three fires in the last three years which is very unsatisfactory. I can see that.

SHRI S. M. BHATTAM : What are the names of Members constituting the Committee and what are the terms of reference of the Committee, what are the causes for the outbreak of fire and what recommendations have been made to prevent such outbreak of fire ?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : I do not have the names of Members of the Committee but the recommendations of the 1983, 1984, and 1985 Committees are here. They are somewhat lengthy. If you permit me, Sir, I would read them out or I can lay the information on the Table of the House.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : Lay it on the Table.

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Is the hon. Minister aware of the fact that the Durgapur Steel Plant is running with a low capacity utilisation due to industrial unrest ? Also is it not a fact that the main cause for this is the fact that the CPM-led union workers are creating all sorts of troubles and are trying to sabotage the production in the name of obsolete plant so that they can augment their process not to produce steel but to produce mud ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL, MINES AND COAL (SHRI VASANT SATHE) : I would like to state that it is not correct that in Durgapur there is any special problem

with the employees to whichever union they may belong. We have improved the relations with all our workers and we are getting cooperation from them. This will be clear from the fact that the man-days lost have reduced substantially in Durgapur as well.

SHRI BHOLA NATH SEN : May I, through you, Sir, ask one question, namely, whether the goods which have been lost due to fire were imported and if so, how long it will take to replace them and whether this will delay the date of completion ?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : No, Sir. We expect that the delay might be not more than a month or two. The contractor has assured this. I have a list of the items of equipment that were damaged. The items are a few items of turbo-generator 18.19 tonnes, Unit I; a few items of electrical equipment, Unit I four tonnes and Unit II 10.2 tonnes; some instruments Unit I 23.8 tonnes and Unit II 36.2 tonnes ..

PROF. N. G. RANGA : What is the value ?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : The total cost is about Rs. 10 crores. Some of them are imported and some of them are not.

SHRI BHOLA NATH SEN : Are they readily available in stock—those which are imported ?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH : They are not in stock. But the responsibility will be that of the contractor to get these as soon as possible.

Educated Unemployed Benefited under Self Employment Guarantee Scheme

*409. SHRI JIJENDRA PRASADA† :
SHRIMNTI GEETA MUKHERJEE :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to lay a statement showing :

(a) the number of unemployed educated persons benefited throughout the country, under Self-Employment Guarantee Scheme during the last three years, State-wise and year-wise;

(b) whether the targets fixed under the scheme have been achieved; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?