

(b) what is the present composition of this Committee?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) No such Committee has been appointed.

(b) Does not arise.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: As far as we remember and as per the press reports, such a committee with Mr. V. P. Naik as Chairman was appointed. It may be that the nomenclature may have been different. He was appointed as the Chairman of the Study Group on the Development of the Western Ghats. A telegram to this effect was received from the then Minister for Planning the late Mr. D. P. Dhar. We know this much that Mr. Ghorshade, Finance Minister of Karnataka, was also appointed on this Study Group. We believe this unless this is make-belief or false publicity or it is a case of amnesia. May I know whether this Committee has been appointed or not, whatever be its name?

MR. SPEAKER: The answer is quite definite. He says there is no such committee.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: For the Western Ghats of course there is a committee. But he has put a question on the Konkan region. There is no such thing as a Committee for the Konkan Region. Western Ghat means many things. Western Ghat also includes the whole area ranging from Goa upto Tamilnadu.

MR. SPEAKER: Next question.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: This is exactly the same question. Mr. V. P. NAIK was appointed as its Chairman.

MR. SPEAKER: I am not going to allow question on Western Ghats

SHRI B. V. NAIK: Western Ghats mean Konkan.

MR. SPEAKER: You can put a separate question.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: After all, Konkan is in Western Ghats. Some part of Karnataka is there. Some part of Kerala may be there. But his question should not be brushed aside.

MR. SPEAKER: For Western Ghats, they will have to put a separate question. I have passed on to the next question please

Operational Problems in Coal Mines of Ranigunj Area

*497. **SHRI S. R. DAMANI:** Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether dangerous operational problems exist in the coal mines of Ranigunj area;

(b) if so, facts thereof; and

(c) steps taken to improve the safety factor in these mines?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (PROF. SIDDHESHWAR PRASAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) All aspects of safety in mines are regularly attended to by mine officials including managers in course of their regular inspection of mine working. Besides the above, the officers of the Directorate General of Mines Safety visit the mines periodically and any irregularities reported by them are also promptly attended to.

SHRI S. R. DAMANI: In the newspapers this report has appeared that Raniganj area is a dangerous area for mining operations. May I know from the hon. Minister whether any Committee has been appointed to examine

the safety measures existing there and to suggest what further measures are required to be taken for the safety of the mine workers?

PROF. SIDDHESHWAR PRASAD: Sir, the Ministry of Energy has appointed a Committee on January 5, 1976 which consists of 13 members and it is headed by the Joint Secretary in the Ministry, Shri S. B. Lal. The terms of reference of the Committee includes (1) review of all cases of coalmines where the operations are being carried out and also in the areas which are waterlogged, (2) to analyse the causes of accidents in coalmines; (3) to review the existing arrangements for safety and (4) to recommend what steps should be taken to improve the safety and analyse the safety consciousness and arrangements for rescues and recovery operations in the nationalised coalmines.

SHRI S. R. DAMANI: May I know when is this Committee likely to submit its report? May I further know whether a detailed survey has been made of all the coalmines apart from the dangers that are there in the working of the mines?

PROF. SIDDHESHWAR PRASAD: Sir, this Committee is supposed to submit its report by 30th of this month. As far as mine safety is concerned, they have their internal arrangements in the Coal India Ltd. which are looking into all the mines where there is any danger.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: I would like to know whether it is not a fact that the mines safety organisation in this area is so inadequate that, on an average, each mine could be physically inspected only once in every two years; there are not enough inspectors and other people to get around more frequently. I want to know whether it is a fact or not. And, does not the Government consider it to be an highly unsatisfactory affair?

340 I.S.—1

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI K. C. PANT): Sir, I do not know exactly how often these officers of the D.G.M.S. can visit the mines. But, who that is, the Ministry of Energy, takes a view that it should not be necessary for any outside agency to tell us that we should be careful about the safety of the workers. And, it is on the basis of this approach that we have set up an internal safety organisation. The D.G.M.S. is welcome to give his suggestions. We would welcome the suggestion. We are conscious—the Coal India Ltd., is conscious of its own obligations in the matter—of it and the entire safety organisation that has been set up has got officers who go down the mines most frequently and I can give you the details if the hon. Member wants that the number of times the officers should go into the mines has been specified.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: Is it once in a year?

SHRI K. C. PANT: I want to clarify this. The Chief Safety Officer has to go in actual underground inspection at least 12 days in a month. For others, they are more frequent. The responsibility of the safety officers is not only to point out the contravention. The other officers of the safety organisation spend from 18 to 20 days in a month in the underground inspection. There are people right down in the coal mine level and area level. For them, naturally, they have set the number of days they will be visiting—whether each mine is visited every day or every ten days—this I can find out.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: Sir, after the Chasnala incident, the people all over and, especially, in the mines areas, are very apprehensive and panicky also that mines accidents may take place at any time in any place. The Minister has kindly pointed out that in his own department—Coal India Limited—there is a team to look into the safety in the mines. In the Raniganj area, may I know, in the last one year how many accidents have

taken place—in the Raniganj Coal belt area—and what was the nature of the accidents and how many casualties were there?

PROF. SIDHESHWAR PRASAD: Just now, I do not have the figures the hon. Member has asked for. But, as far as safety operations and safety measures in the mine areas are concerned, they have been greatly improved. We have been taking steps in consultation with the D.G.M.S. to see that such accidents do not occur and wherever such accidents occur, we go into details. We take all the remedial measures to see that in future no such accidents take place.

SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHURI. With regard to the Raniganj coal area, apart from the usual operational problems and hazards one, of the persistent dangers there is spreading of underground fire in some mines and subsidence. It has been observed by competent people that so far as sand-stowing and other things are concerned they are not upto the standard everywhere, and that has created a very extensive problem of subsidence, particularly subsidence of the ground soil in Jharia area, and the safety of the Jharia town is also said to be threatened. I would like to know from the Minister whether, apart from the Committee, these particular problems are being attended to by the Energy Department?

PROF. SIDHESHWAR PRASAD: Coal India is aware of the fact that there are some fires underground in the mines and all measures have been taken. As far as Jharia is concerned, there is no danger due to fire in coal mines. This aspect has been looked into by the competent authority.

SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHURI: Sir, before he makes the statement regarding Jharia, I will suggest to the Minister to check-up the facts.

PROF. SIDHESHWAR PRASAD: This question was raised in the last Session and the experts are of the view that as far as Jharia town is concerned there is no danger.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

काशी विश्वनाथ एक्सप्रेस गाड़ी में डकैती

2. श्री नानोश्वर द्विवेदी: क्या रेल मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या दिनांक 24/25 मार्च, 1976 की रात्रि को हरदोई और शाहजहाँपुर के बीच चलती हुई काशी-विश्वनाथ एक्सप्रेस गाड़ी में डकैती डाली गई :

(ख) क्या डाकुओं के साथ मूठभेड़ हुई थी ;

(ग) कितने डाकू पकड़े गये तथा कितने मारे गए; और

(घ) अब तक की गई जांच के क्या निष्कर्ष निकले हैं ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MOHD. SHAFI QURESHI): (a) Yes, Sir, on the night of 25/26th March, 1976 and not on the night of 24/25th March, 1976.

(b) One passenger opened fired on the dacoits in self defence.

(c) 5 dacoits were arrested and 4 died.

(d) In addition to the arrest of 5 culprits, looted property has been recovered. Further investigation by Police is in progress.