

the entire country and improve the economic condition.

2. Need to make telecom system more effective, efficient, rapid and modern by setting up exchange equipped with new electronic system having more capacity in place of old and traditional crossbar system at Ajmer Telephone Exchange.

[English]

SHRI P. NAMGYAL (Ladakh) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the following items may be included in the next week's agenda:

1. Regarding the dismal working conditions, the old and worn out machines together with very low standard of programmes and distortion of Ladakhi language and culture being broadcast over the Leh station of A.I.R. needs to be discussed.
2. The non-commissioning of the new A.I.R. station at Kargil which is ready for commissioning for the last year calls for a discussion in this august House.

14.09 hrs.

#### STATEMENT BY MINISTER

##### WTO Ministerial Conference at Singapore

[English]

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : Sir, with your permission, I wish to share some information received from our delegation in Singapore, on the Ministerial Conference which took place recently.

Firstly, the Conference has categorically stated that the ILO is the competent body to deal with core labour standards. The Conference has rejected the use of restrictive trade measures to enforce labour standards. It has emphasised that the comparative advantage of developing countries should not be put in question in any way.

Moreover, the Conference has promised its continued support to the Labour Ministers who are carrying on this work in the ILO. Thus, India's position is completely reflected in the declaration and in our view WTO will do nothing more in the matter.

On the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the initial proposal of developed countries, particularly the US, was that we should begin an educative process and establish a working group as a prelude to negotiate an agreement, a multilateral agreement. Fortunately, our opposition and the opposition of some other

countries have prevailed and that proposal has not been accepted by the Conference.

Instead, as a result of many other developing countries being persuaded, the Conference has, referring to the existing TRIMS agreement, said that by virtue of article 9 of the existing TRIMS agreement, two working groups may be established to study the matters relating to investment and competition. India opposed this position. However, other developing countries were inclined to agree to establish the working groups. Barring India, no other country was willing to oppose it totally. Even while opposing the idea of working groups, India insisted on two main riders.

The first rider is that the Conference should make it clear that the work that will be done by the working groups shall not pre-judge the question whether negotiations will be initiated at all. The second rider is - it will be clearly understood - that any decision on future negotiations will take place only after an explicit consensus decision among the WTO members. These two riders have been accepted by the Conference.

The Ministers have also welcomed the work underway in UNCTAD and have expressly stated that they encourage cooperation between UNCTAD and WTO. From India's point of view while India has been able to persuade the member countries to reject any reference to Multilateral Agreement on Investment, India is unhappy even with the revised formulation. India's unhappiness has been expressed by the Minister of Commerce while addressing a Press conference immediately after the Declaration.

On information technology, an agreement was arrived at. Some countries have signed it. India has declined to sign the agreement. On labour standards, trade and investment, there are no agreements. There are only references in the Declaration.

The Minister of Commerce is expected to come back to India tomorrow. On behalf of the Government, I would like to say that he will make a full statement on Monday. I have shared the information that I have. I think barring some unhappiness about the reference to two working groups on trade and investment, our brief has been faithfully adhered to by our delegation. They have done their best to persuade the member countries to accept India's position.

On other minor issues, India's position is reflected in the declaration, is my information... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I think the position is clear.

(Interruptions)

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : My request is let us have a debate on Monday.. (Interruptions)

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (Hooghly) : All right, we can have a debate on Monday. But there are two things ... (Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Lucknow) Sir, we would like to have a copy of the declaration ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I think the position taken by India is very clear.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum) : It is different from what the Press reports say ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Yes, it is different from what the Press reports say.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : I must say that the Press reports are very varied. I went back this afternoon. I did not have much time. I think the *Time of India* report is more or less accurate. Although the headline is a little alarming, the *Times of India* report is reasonably accurate, in my view. But I do not want to assert anything. Let us wait till Monday when the Minister of Commerce will be available...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, the versions coming in different sections of the Press may be varied. But two things are clear. Even yesterday, our delegation has taken a particular stand and made some pronouncements. I can quote also.

MR. SPEAKER : No. I do not think you need quote the Press. We have to go by what the hon. Minister said.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, I am not quoting. I am just referring to it.

Even if other developing countries have been changing and shifting their positions, the Government of India may stick to its original position because all these things are well-known. This reference to the WTO is an extraneous thing. The Government of India have been very categorical. These are not things to be discussed; these are all new issues. The WTO is not at all concerned with all these things. So, no reference to it shall be permitted.

Now there is capitulation to the US and to the pressures from the rich nations. We are not convinced with what the hon. Minister has said. We can wait for the full version to come. Let us wait for the Minister to come back. But this is a very disturbing feature; and the whole nation is concerned about it.

*[Translation]*

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Nalanda) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is clear from the hon. Minister's speech that such a document has been signed for which they did not get mandate. As I said in the House in the morning that when we met the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Ministers of Finance, Commerce and Industry along with other Members of Parliamentarian Forum on

Intellectual Property, then it was made clear that it would not be allowed to happen. There was a reason behind saying so. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you must know it because you have been in every Government since 1983-87 that the Government of India denied to accept all the pressures of U.S. Government. Shrimati Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. She did not bow down before America because she had understood the conspiracy of America to get entry in every country's commercial as well as other fields. When Shri Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister, he also continued the same policy of Shrimati Indira Gandhi.

Shri V.P. Singh, was the leader of Indian Government's delegation to Punta Deli Aste in 1987. I am saying Americans because others have no importance in this regard, only Americans decide what to do and the entire world bow's down before them. When the Americans started TRIPS and TRIMS. I shall not take the valuable time of the House but I would like to clear this point in the environment created by the hon. Minister. When 'TRIPS' and 'TRIMS' were discussed there, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Rajiv Gandhi and the delegation leader Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh opposed it. Many nations joined them in opposing it and such an atmosphere was created that the Americans began to feel that the talks want progress further. Then they proposed that 'GATT' i.e. the trade matters should be discussed and Parallel track approach should be adopted in the matters of intellectual property and investment measures which implied that informal talks should be held. About that, the Minister has said here that notwithstanding, holding on to our position, all this is based on one's capability. However the forces we are confronted with and the forces that are trying to impose their own policies on others; for them, it is just a manipulation of words and nothing else. In having signed the present document, the very same terms have been endorsed as were endorsed earlier in Putan del Aste where it was state that only trade matters will be discussed under GATT and the rest of the discussions will be carried out on parallel track. The present endorsement is much more perilous. The Government has agreed to the proposal of a study group. What is this study group? The study groups is not a seminar.

*[English]*

The WTO is not a seminar.

*[Translation]*

Where one may walk in and say that a declaration is to be made and a working group should be set up. This is not a working group. This is not a study group. A special section of WTO has been made to sit together and it has stated working. Would the Finance Minister deny that the decisions taken by the study group or their functioning is not supervised by the General Council of WTO. Why would it waste its time. Officials drawing crores of rupees as salaries are sitting there. Why would

they waste their time for the study groups if they are not interested in imposing such policies on the world. It was decided that our country would not be involved in it however everything was agreed today before yesterday. The Government had decided against it. The Prime Minister had also voted against it but what happened thereafter. It is being said now that Singapore has said this and Malaysia has said that. So whether India would meekly follow Singapore and Malaysia. Has our status been lowered down to such an extent that we have to be their followers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Malaysia is a very clever country. The Prime Minister of Malaysia abuse America and its Minister in charge of Trade Affairs acts as a staunch follower of America. I would not reveal in the House the political motive behind it.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I do not think you should refer to other countries like that.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : However I feel ashamed of the fact that India having a population of 95 crores would be led by Singapore which has a population of only 32 lakhs. Singapore and Malaysia have their own problems. Mr. Speaker, Sir, International Conference of Labour Ministers was held in the Capital in 1995. The then Prime Minister of our country had inaugurated it. Please go through his speech. you had also expressed your views in the conference and the stand you had taken was advised by the whole world that at such a time when a tremendous pressure is being applied, our country is facing the challenge. I would like to read out a line from the Declaration which was drafted with your help. I would like to tell you how it is being violated.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Fernandes, I think you can do that on Monday.

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : I would not take much time. No wrong impression should be created. It should not be reported in tomorrow's newspapers in Singapore and America that we have succumbed to the pressure. I have got unilateral measures. I have with me the said Declaration wherein, in Para 3, you had stated:

[English]

"We must emphasise that the application of unilateral coercive economic measures by the developed countries aimed at the third world countries with a view to obtaining

economic and political advantages is unacceptable. Similarly, if any country claims to apply its laws extraterritorially, in violation of the sovereignty of the other States, that is unacceptable."

[Translation]

Whether the Finance Minister agrees with the Times of India report filed in by Mr. Aiyar.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : After this, we are to have a full debate on Monday.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : We will have a debate.

MR. SPEAKER : The Minister has made it clear that nowhere has India signed.

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : He is not taking us into confidence. They are trying to create such an impression that there is nothing to worry about. I believe that you should take an initiative. This should be a matter of national consensus. It is not a party matter. I am well aware that the present Government is following the same policies as were formulated by you. As for your comments regarding TRIMS that even after re-consideration in TRIMS, all those in the Government, except two or three members had opposed it. Referring to Maracus, you are telling as that there is nothing new in this. I am unable to comprehend it. Firstly there should be a national consensus in this regard. If it has been signed this morning...(Interruptions)

SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH (Balia) (Bihar) : First we should be informed as to whether it has been signed or whether you have given the reply without having signed it?

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ (South Delhi) : The Minister should tell us whether it has been signed or not...(Interruptions) Please reply in yes or no.

SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH : It should be clarified as to whether it has been signed or not and if so, which document has been signed or whether he is speaking about it without having signed it. Whether had has come back without having signed it. It should be clarified in the House. It would be an injustice to keep Lok Sabha in dark about it. Our image will be tarnished...(Interruptions) It should be clarified. It is a very serious matter. Its gravity can be gauged from the fact that as the Minister of Labour you had declined to accept it. So it should be clarified as to what are those circumstances. We should have a discussion on this matter today itself. Why should it be postponed to Monday. We demand to allow us to have this discussion today...(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : Mr. Speaker, Sir, first you should ask him whether the Government has signed it or not?...*(Interruptions)*

*[English]*

MR. SPEAKER : We do not have the documents. Let us have the documents.

*(Interruptions)*

*[Translation]*

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : I will conclude after making my point. These people have signed it. They may say anything here. Mr. Chidambaram is a very good lawyer. He is expert in showing the near defect into victory. I admire his capacity and capability as a lawyer. But today he has advocated a wrong case and we do not accept his arguments.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a national issue. It is a matter of sovereignty of our nation. When the House is assembled here to discuss the matter and these people pledge the country in Singapore. We cannot accept it. That is my submission.

SHRI ATAL BIHAR VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not intend to make a very lengthy speech on this subject. Unfortunately I was not present in the House in the morning.

The Government went to Singapore bound by a policy. This policy was under discussion in the House. That policy had the approval of the country. There were apprehensions that India would be under pressure there and talks would not be limited to trade matters only. Other issues such as social issues, investment and labour which are not directly related with trade matters could also figure in these talks. However we were hopeful that the way the Government took a firm stand ever the issue of C.T.B.T. because of support of the whole country, the Government would take a determined stand on this issue also. The Government should have acted in accordance with the line of action revealed in the House and announcements made. Now it seems as if the Government has been pressurised and it appears that Government has also succumbed to the pressure. These pressurising tactics continued for two-three days. The Parliament in session. If Hon'ble Minister had the will, he could have come to the House and he could have taken the House into confidence. He could have discussed that the Government are facing these difficulties and what are the directions of the House in this regard? Instead we get to read in the newspapers.

*[English]*

India falls in line on labour norms, WTO investments study'-

*[Translation]*

This headline has appeared in 'The Economic Times'. Whatever the Hon'ble Minister has stated in this

regard confirms that the Government took a firm stand regarding some issues whereas it has agreed to certain conditions and clauses. We want to have full text of the documents. We wish to have a discussion on these document and we request the Government to get the approval of the House on the policy put forth in Singapore. It is an international agreement. This agreement should not only be discussed in the House but also the Government should seek the approval of the House in this regard. The news we have got is disturbing and is a blow to our confidence.

*[English]*

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL (Latur) : Sir, this House was adjourned in the morning. A very strong message had gone out as to how this House feels and as to how your goodself and other Members felt about what was happening with respect to the agreement relating to WTO. This strong message cannot be missed by anybody.

However, the hon. Minister has explained to us as to what stand the Government has taken. As the matter is very important it would be useful to understand as to what has actually happened. It would be useful to have the full details about the Agreement and the manner in which the Agreement was negotiated and the signature was made. Without that information it would not be useful to discuss this matter in great detail.

Certainly India would like to protect its sovereignty. India would like to protect what is mentioned in the Constitution, the entire Constitution, the Directive Principles and the duties and India would also certainly like to protect the policies which are made by the Government in consultation with other Parties and in consultation with this House. But in the international field we shall have to move very skillfully. If we do not move very skillfully, we may find it very difficult to protect our interest and what is mentioned in the Constitution and to achieve what we want to achieve according to our policies. So, my submission is that this is a very important issue, let us discuss it fully; let us discuss it with responsibility and let us discuss it skillfully so as to achieve our objective.

MR. SPEAKER : The Finance Minister has to go to the other House also. The Members there are also waiting. So please be brief.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : Sir, there is a consensus in regard to the inclusion of the social clause and labour matters and other matters in the House as well as in the nation. A confusion in this respect has been created today when we saw reports in various newspapers saying that our delegation has agreed to certain conditions and certain clauses under pressure from the United State. We are opposed to this and we also want that the full text of the Declaration should be made available to us and there should be a full-fledged debate on this on Monday itself and not later than Monday. It is because this is a very serious

issue concerning the entire nation. As there is a consensus in regard to this, we want that there should be a full-fledged discussion on this on Monday after the copies of the Declaration are made available to us.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat) : Sir, the Prime Minister made a very strong statement in Harare. According to me, whatever information has so far been given is not in keeping with the statement of the Prime Minister in Harare.

Sir, without taking much of your time, I would only like to submit that a full-fledged discussion on this subject could alone give this opportunity to this House to give the views of the nation. Therefore, at the earliest a discussion should be held and an assurance may kindly be given that nothing should be done without consulting this House and taking the nation into confidence.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN (Karad) : Sir, when would the statement and other relevant papers be made available to us?

MR. SPEAKER : It would be available on Monday.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : When would we discuss it then?

MR. SPEAKER : On Monday itself.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : Sir, if it is distributed on Monday, then we would not get enough time to study it. *(Interruptions)*

*[Translation]*

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : If he is coming tomorrow, the relevant papers should be made available to us tomorrow night itself. *(Interruptions)*

*[English]*

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : Sir, it should be made available to us before Monday. *(Interruptions)*

*[Translation]*

SHRI RAMENDRA KUMAR (Begusarai) : Sir, I would like to know whether the signatures have been put or not and if it has been put then on which paper?

*[English]*

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum) : Sir, I would like to make a submission. At the time when the discussion will take place. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, we want both, copies of the statement as well as the Agreement, the Declaration. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Normally, in international conferences, when a declaration is adopted, signatures are not taken. Countries are not required to sign it. It is just adopted by the Conference, saying 'This is a Declaration'. It has been adopted.

SHRI RAMENDRA KUMAR : When the declaration has been adopted, it means that it has been adopted with the consent of India. What else do you want to know?

*[Translation]*

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you said that Declaration has been adopted, it is our good fortune that you have a good knowledge of this subject. That is why you are able to understand the hints in this regard. You have said without asking him that Declaration has been adopted. When the hon'ble Minister was giving information about Singapore his facial expressions were showing that while adopting the Declaration India has not surrendered in any way. But while sharing the information he stated that India had accepted the constitution of a working group. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you can note the point here that when anybody wants to get his demand conceded, his first exercise is constitution of a working group and India has accepted the constitution of that working group. It means that now lobbying will start and ultimately India will accept this demand in the name of consensus. The point on which Shri George Fernandes was giving stress that our opposition is on this aspect and you have also been the champion of this cause that we would not accept the constitution of a study group. As Shri Vajpayee demanded for a copy of the Declaration and the reason for our opposition on this point is that the hon'ble Minister said that the copy of the Declaration was not available. I would like to ask from the hon'ble Minister as to whether India has given its consent to the Declaration without going through it? If copy of the Declaration is available, then why are you hiding it? If you have not made study of it, how the Government has given its clearance? When the hon'ble Minister had left for there, he had not been briefed in this way. His brief was that he would not accept any study group and this item would not be allowed to figure in the agenda.

Even the Prime Minister of Singapore had said a day before the conference commenced, that he would not sign it but later, he backtracked. If Malaysia and Singapore are backtracked, will India also follow them? India is a country having a population of 90 crores and have its own identity. It is capable in not following Malaysia and Singapore. Therefore, I would like to ask as to how he had allowed this item to be included in the agenda? The Government has the copy of the Declaration but it does not want to present it in the House. The copy of the Declaration should be presented in the House so that we are able to know the points on which you have surrendered.

LT. GENERAL SHRI PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI (Deoria) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to add two more points to what Shrimati Sushma Swaraj has said. It has just been stated that India has not signed the agreement regarding information technology. It seems that India has done wrong by not signing this agreement. Earlier,

there was no mention about information technology and it was not figured in its agenda also. The objective of the WTO is that any new item should be put forward only with the consent of all the countries. If these 29 countries are bringing forward new agenda and getting it signed by all countries, it is a new precedence by which new things are being done. The hon'ble Minister while leaving for Singapore, had said that any new item would not be allowed to be added in the agenda. But I would like to ask as to whether constitution of a study group is not a new thing whereas it was not discussed earlier? The item regarding information technology is a new one. Instead of saying that why these new items are being allowed to be added in the agenda, the Government has said that India has not signed on it. This is happening time and again. Today, in the morning, when I come to know about the position, that created a very odd situation of order, that the same thing should be repeated in the foreign country as has been asked here. Malaysia and other small countries come with full preparations but we have such incomplete preparations that if even a single backtracks to a little extent, we also take a new stand keeping aside what we had been asked here to say in the foreign country. There is no doubt that India has given its consent to the Declaration as the hon'ble Minister is not denying it and now a detailed discussion on this issue will be held on Monday. But my new point which I would like to raise.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : It is going to be Three o'clock. We have to take up Private Members' Business; the Calling Attention is there and the reply of the Minister is also there.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to make one point. The points raised by Sushmaji are very important ones. There must have been consultations; documents must have been there; and they ought to have been presented before us. I also want to submit that since this discussion concerns our policy towards the rest of the developed countries, I believe, the Prime Minister's presence is absolutely essential when we have a discussion on this in the Lok Sabha. He should be present in the House at the time of the discussion because he alone can represent the Government and the concern must go out from here.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (Muvattupuzha) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a time when we have to think of even formation of a Common Asian community because we are finding things going in ways which we cannot control on our own. I think, we should seek the support of other similarly placed nations also. The message that will go out from this Parliament will be a very strong message; I congratulate you for this. I would like to submit that we must get copies of the Declaration as well as the copies of the Statement at the earliest so that a good discussion

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE (Berhampore) (WB) : Sir, a Declaration once adopted in an international conference is, perhaps, binding upon the country attending that conference. If it be so, or if it be the international convention, what would be the utility of discussion in the House? This is my humble submission.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR (Mumbai North-East) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, from the statement made by the hon. Minister in the House one thing is not clear and that is, whether the Declaration has been signed over there or not. It is not crystal clear from the statement. Secondly, what has been discussed over there prior to the signature? Are they going to sign the Declaration only after taking the consent of the House following a discussion? That point has also not been made clear. After signing the pact, there is no use of discussing it. So, it is necessary that the copies of the agreement are be made available to this House. All Members of Parliament should go through these documents and then only there can be a discussion. After obtaining the consent of this august House only the Government should sign the Declaration. That is my submission.

MR. SPEAKER : What I understand is, as far as the Declaration is concerned, it has been adopted where it has been clearly said that labour matters, setting of labour standards, is an exclusive jurisdiction of the ILO and WTA has nothing to do with it. That part is very clear. It is very good; that is what has been our stand. Now, as far as the matter relating to information technology is concerned, India has refused to sign. Is that the correct position Mr. Minister?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : We have declined to sign it.

MR. SPEAKER : Yes, we have declined to sign it. Only on matters relating to investment and competition, Working Groups have been set up. There the Government of India had initially opposed tooth and nail but finding it difficult, India had put two conditions. And the conditions that had been put by India have been accepted by the Conference. Is that the position Mr. Minister? That is what I understand from what you said.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Your understanding is correct from the information available.

MR. SPEAKER : In any case, with the consent of the House, I would like to say that copies of the Declaration be made available to the Members in the morning hours of Monday. Discussion under Rule 193 will start on this matter at four o'clock on that day.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : The Declaration should be made available along with the statement of the Government.

MR. SPEAKER : The statement will be made at four o'clock. I think that is better.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : It is the statement made by the Government in Singapore.

MR. SPEAKER : No, it is the statement that will be made here. The Minister will make an elaborate statement.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : That will depend on the time that you decide to have the debate.

MR. SPEAKER : It is at four o'clock but the copies of the Declaration should be made available to the Members at 11 o'clock.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTEREE : It should not just be the copies of the Declaration. Certain resolutions have been adopted which we oppose.

All our statements on this Resolution should also be laid before the House.

MR. SPEAKER : Yes.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Otherwise, it is meaningless if something is adopted. We have to either accede to it or not. Our statement concerning that should be laid on the Table of the House.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : The entire documents should be laid on the Table of the House.

14.46 hrs.

(Mr. Deputy-Speaker in the Chair)

#### CALLING ATTENTION TO URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

##### Problems of fire and subsidence in and around Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : I call the attention of the Minister of State of the Ministry of Coal to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that she may make a statement thereon:

"The reported situation arising out of fire and subsidence taking place very fast in and around the areas of Jharia, Raniganj and Asansol coalfields and the steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank the hon'ble Members Shri Badu Deb Acharia as he has drawn the attention of this House towards this issue. Jharia, Raniganj and some other towns near Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields are located on pillar based mines where mining had taken place almost five to six decades ago. The stability of these pillar mines is doubtful as the mining had been done in an unsystematic manner. The Gugnani Committee has been constituted by the Department of

Coal for conducting a deep study about the security in the Coal mines including the issue of threat posed by the old under ground mines before the towns and residential areas.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : There should be order in the House, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : No side talks please. Please take your seats.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH : In August 1979, the committee had mentioned that there is a big and multifaceted problem of subsidence in Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields. In Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields there are many towns, villages, rivers/pond belt areas, roads and railway lines etc. which are situated on the small Coal pillars. Besides this, fire is also active in these areas which is creating danger to the structures situated on the surface. Not only the stability of the mines under these areas is difficult and dangerous but its effectiveness is also doubtful.

The fire had already broken out in the Jharia coalfields long time ago and it had been reported in the year 1916. During these years the fire spread to such an extent that it has become very difficult to prevent it.

As per the survey conducted after the nationalisation of these mines, 70 incidents of fire had been reported in the radius of 17 square kilometers in Bharat Coking Coal Ltd. 22 projects involving Rs. 114.59 crore were launched to deal with these 70 fire incidents. With the joint efforts and the estimated expenditure of Rs. 73 crore fire could be extinguished only in 10 incidents out of them and in rest of the cases fire could be brought more or less under control.

To find the long term solution to the problem of fire incidents taking place in Jharia Coalfields a comprehensive study has been started under the "Jharia Mine fire control Technical Assistance project" with World Bank's financial assistance of 12 million American dollars. It has been revealed from the study that to deal with the fire incidents taking place in Jharia mines, as per the revised estimate about 22,300 families are to be shifted and rehabilitated and equipments worth 225 million American dollars will have to be installed. Discussion is going on with the expert Committee of the World Bank to implement this project.

Jharia city is situated over the area based on instable pillars and the problem of subsidence also cannot be denied. Due to uncontrolled increase in the accommodation in these areas, it has become very difficult to take effective measures to deal with the fire incidents. In the most sensitive areas, people have been warned time and again of the threat of subsidence and they have been requested to be shifted in the safer places.